

# Sino-Indian Relationship: A Critical Overview

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**Abstract:-** *The continuous discussion of India-China relations among experts in the strategic and general academia has raised various questions, such as the possibilities for the future and the main difficulties the two countries' relations would face. In the past 60 years, there has been more shared mistrust and distrust than a friendly attitude between India and China. Over the years, this mutual mistrust and suspicion increased, reaching extreme levels in the present situation. Reaching a consensus on various delicate problems, such as the Sino-Indian border disputes, has always been difficult due to the differences in viewpoint between the two parties. However, one must not assume that China and India are at odds with one another for all purposes. China and India have made several serious attempts to resolve their issues, notably regarding the border problem. Despite disagreements on essential topics that influence bilateral ties, India and China's relations are also growing. The two nations' establishment of the Comprehensive and Collaborative Alliance for Growth and Harmony in 2005 and the signing of A Common Vision for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in 2008 demonstrate the strengthening of their connections. India and China have undoubtedly evolved as the major fastest expanding powers, and their bilateral ties have increasingly taken on a worldwide and geopolitical significance. It really would be crucial to reflect on the history of India and China's relationship before looking towards the structures that may enable robust bilateral cooperation. This study's main goals are to evaluate and analyse the general trends in the India-China relationship and investigate potential sectors of cooperation between the*

*two nations. There are numerous positive and negative implications to the trajectory of the bilateral partnership. The study would draw attention to both the occurrences and the divergences before making suggestions for bridging the current ones. Additionally, this could attempt to justify vigorous and positive participation.*

**Keywords:** *India-China relations, mutual interests, constructive engagement, strategic relations*

## 1. Introduction

The current relationship between China and India is full of uncertainty and ambiguity because both nations have chosen different approaches to resolve their differences. The issues between the two major powers are more a result of their shared mistrust and suspicion rather than the inheritance of certain problems.

The two greatest emerging nations in the world, China and India, have a lot of things in common, particularly regarding local growth and socioeconomic change. They are going through a phase of extremely fast financial expansion. Yet, both countries are having trouble defining their place in the world, given their new, significant impact on the international economy—both advocate for a multipolar world where they could play a significant role against the superpowers. China's strategic objectives in India stem from its aim to establish new markets, discover investment opportunities, and find resources to boost its economy besides maintaining its strategic supremacy in the region. Despite the

inherited, bilateral problems, China pretends to maintain cordial ties with India to accomplish these goals. However, India's emphasis on its own growth also motivates it to forge favourable ties with China. Meanwhile, because of the long history of ties between China and India, views about establishing friendly ties with China are still somewhat divided among India. Although left organisations have long wanted to establish cordial links with China, such as the Communist Party of India (Marxist), right-leaning parties and certain members of the intelligence apparatus see China as a serious security concern [1].

## 2. Historical Overview

It should be emphasised again that India recognised China as soon as the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. Following the establishment of diplomatic ties, China and India had a number of problems that they both shared. The two nations, China and India, have also agreed on a range of crucial global concerns. A step toward gaining this confidence was the signing of the Panchsheel Agreement in 1954, but for various reasons, this trust did not survive for long. The development signed between the two nations was reflected in the Preamble of the Pact. Through the Panchsheel Agreement, India recognised Tibet as a part of China and released the British of its duties and commitments there.

The goodwill fostered a favourable environment and opened the door for the then-Chinese Premier Chou En-lai to travel to India three times between 1954 and 1957. Jawaharlal Nehru, the Indian Prime Minister, only went there once, in October 1954. Because China welcomed Nehru with open arms and a red carpet, his trip there was historic. There has never before been such excitement and hope for India-China ties. But such joy and hope did not last for long.

India undoubtedly knew what China aimed at when they drew their boundary with India. Chou En-lai inexplicably disregarded and did not take seriously the issue that Nehru had brought up during the debate with the Chinese concerning the erroneous boundary issues. The Chinese perspective on the MacMohan Line differed entirely from India's. On several of these important topics, including the border issues, there was a decrease in mutual understanding during Chou En-lai's subsequent travels to India. When news broke in the Chinese media that Tibet and China's Sinkiang province had been connected by road in the Aksai Chin region, it revealed China's intents and plans.

India seemed extremely clear in its approach from the beginning when it came to the development of the international elements of the relationship between India and China. India has always been cautious in dealing with China on various forums. In adopting a position on the Korean War (1950-1953), India also displayed a strong sense of maturity. India had abstained from voting to impose an embargo on China and had publicly voted against the United Nations draught measure designating China as an enemy.

Although India's repeated and relentless attempts to persuade China to come to an amicable solution to the border problem, it has been unable to persuade China. It is important to note that India's position on the border problem primarily mirrors its position on the Tibet question. The deteriorating India-China ties reached a critical point in 1959 with the Tibetan conflict. India's favouring Tibet and granting the Dalai Lama political sanctuary changed things. Since that time, China's policy toward India has altered. The track one level (Government to Government) discussion between China and India in 1960-1961 over the border problem did not result in any favourable or expected outcomes.

### 3. India's Tradition of China-Watching

During the classical era, China and India have had sporadic but distinct historical exchanges of traders and pilgrims, making China-watching in India a cultural obsession. Even though there were few encounters, the interchange of intellectuals seemed to have a relatively significant impact. This has been amplified by India's post-independence perceptions of China, which were dominated by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's indulgences and continued to reflect their historical romanticism about an "a thousand million strong cooperative of the Chinese and Indian people," despite some criticism of Nehru's concerns about the long-term threat posed by a powerful and centralised Chinese State [2]. Moreover, India's disgrace during the 1962 India-China conflict would permanently mark its conscience and render any China-watching forbidden in the decades that followed [3].

It certainly appears to become growing indigenisation of India's views and activities concerning the current Indian discussion on a growing China. However, the formal viewpoint still tends to be prescriptive and idealistic. It keeps highlighting the connections and cooperation between early civilisations and current society. These strategies nevertheless have a strong connection to the 'anti-colonial' and 'anti-Western' discourse in India from the 1950s. It has a more benevolent perspective on China's future by underlining the growing external pressures on China's attitude as well as China's growing dependency on the global framework [4].

According to one Chinese analyst, there are essentially three types of Indians who follow China [5]. The first class attempts to provide a truthful portrayal of the territorial dispute and the ups and downs of India-China ties while portraying China objectively. Some of these advocates a positive and proactive

engagement and believe Beijing has no plans to challenge New Delhi [6]. However, "hardliners," among whom the "China danger" idea is now widely accepted, perceive China as a significant and immediate threat to India [7]. The majority opinion favours multilateralism and urges China and India to cooperate in order to create a multipolar world [8].

According to a second Chinese expert on how India views China, most Indian professionals consider China's rise as both a possibility and a threat. But unlike the generally sane perception of China's industrial expansion, Indian attitudes toward China's military escalation continue to be overwhelmingly unfavourable [9]. This amply demonstrates how, even 45 years later, the effects of the 1962 India-China war still influence Indian policy and views regarding China.

### 4. Contemporary Debate on Indo-China Issues

China's "second revolution" under Deng Xiaoping and the Soviet Union's demise eliminated the previous ideological divide, which brought a new pragmatism age of India-China cooperation. Simultaneously, Beijing's military and political sway increased along with its admittance into the US-led global power elite due to the success of China's "Four Modernisations" campaign in the early 1980s. This led to new imperatives for India's China policy, frequently forcing New Delhi to negotiate with Beijing on the latter's conditions.

Moreover, a stable alliance government in New Delhi, improved financial growth since the early 1990s, and India's choice to eventually use its nuclear option in 1998 gave the country's interactions with China a greater sense of self-assurance. This is reflected in the present Beijing-New Delhi agreement, which, save for a brief time between 1958–1963, ties between China and India haven't always been antagonistic, even though they haven't always

been complementary and cooperative. However, despite the extended values of diversity and democracy in Indian culture, various viewpoints are also considered when deciding about China generally in India [10].

Researchers generally divided current Chinese-Indian discussions into categories based on time, place, and viewpoints. The argument between India and China has been examined at many points, including after independence, the 1962 war, the rapprochement, the 1998 nuclear testing, and so forth. Likewise to this, various parts of India have varied priorities when it comes to China. Indians who have studied China abroad could be classified under a different heading. Depending on their inclination, different groups were characterised as eagles, pigeons, owls, or quite remarkably, sinophiles and sinophobes. Some refer to these groupings as mainstream, while others label India's China expert's pragmatists, hyper-realists, and appeasers [11].

The institutional linkages and legacies of the Indian Ministries of Defence (MoD), External Affairs (MEA), Home Affairs (MHA), and, more recently, those working in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), which has recently centralised all policy-making, can also be used to understand the famous understandings of China in India. India's National Security Advisor (NSA) has expressed his opinions more directly and forcefully in recent years. The viewpoints of the political, educational, non-governmental (NGOs), and corporate communities may also be categorised. These distinct populations place differing importance on treaties, figures of trading or military spending, the development of conventions and systems, particularly through meetings, and business interests. A powerful pro lobby has recently arisen in India thanks to the large numbers of young Indian students studying in China as well as the rising number of small-time, local business visitors. Others

regard this mosaic as a reflection of the vital diversity of life and discourse in Indian culture, while everyone else sees it as a blatant example of the country's lack of a cogent China policy [12].

In conclusion, China intrigues, excite, and tests the conceptual curiosity and conventional categories of analysts in India, unlike other international states. China continues to be perceived, particularly at the grassroots level, as a mystifying, inexplicable, and enigmatic country that inspires both passion and misgivings [13].

### 5. Major Themes In India-China Relations

However, various analysts have sensibly assigned different priorities to each of these topics, and there has never been any misunderstanding over the key issues in India-China relations. One may argue that the ten "Ts" accurately describe practically all of the key concerns that have shaped India's opinions as well as strategies against China over the past 60 years. Such ten "Ts" can be anticipated to keep defining both the current and emerging boundaries of India-China relationships because the majority of such concerns are still open for discussion.

An exhaustive analysis of each of these concerns and their respective importance for India's policymakers would be beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, each of these topics has previously been the subject of an abundance of studies and publications. Furthermore, because the majority of these problems still overlap and impact one another, it is impossible to divide them into separate categories. Lastly, as time goes on, the relative importance of these issues has shifted. For example, the "special relationship" between China and Pakistan, which has been a significant source of annoyance for Indian policymakers since the early 1960s, has vanished from the bilateral agenda in recent years [13].

Based on the broad range of disciplines applied to them and the context (global, regional, or bilateral) where these concerns are put, the various issues in India-China relationships have varying emphases and implications. The study combines several topics, highlighting their historical development and comparative importance in India-China relationships.

## 6. Territorial Sovereignty Vs Boundary Dispute

While it is frequently referred to as the border disputes between China and India, such terminology is actually quite deceptive. A real issue in the India-China conflict is one of territorial sovereignty, with competing claims covering an area of more than 130,000 square kilometres. China claimed over 90,000 square kilometres of property in the east, whereas India thinks China has taken over 38,000 square kilometres of its territory in the west. There are still variations in the 2,000 sq. km. intermediate region. Additionally, both China and India are overly cautious about territorial sovereignty as a result of their respective historical experiences of colonial domination, rendering agreements challenging. Its border conflict in 1962 only exacerbated their fixation. Accepting the agreements that Tibet signed during the British era would mean that China would acknowledge Tibet's ability to make treaties, which has drawbacks. A huge portion of these lands is physically inhospitable. In addition to these historical legacies, no old documents or folklore support the historical assertions regarding tax compilation or any other indications of administration by either nation in this region. Glaciers, thick woods, or desolate, isolated plateaux make up a large portion of the landscape. As a result, even a benign endeavour to map, survey, or police these areas have severe restrictions. It also holds for additional technological constraints, such as the need to retain an army of executive

presence, which makes border administration in these areas a very challenging task [14].

Under even the best-case scenario, the subject of addressing the India-China border contains complexity that necessitates extensive preliminary work to arrive at an impartial knowledge of this topic. It can be inferred from the reality that the boundary dispute between the two nations was unresolved to their mutual satisfaction even during the joyful days of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai. Since there have been numerous additional revolutions in India-China relations since then, either country is not inclined to make any historical concessions or concessions. The planners of India's China strategy appear to understand this fact completely. Thus, New Delhi had moved across to the Chinese stance that the two nations must attempt to construct a diplomatic settlement on a give-and-take basis rather than insisting on preconditions, like first taking back every square inch of Indian territories. This is anticipated to foster a favourable environment and make it easier to address more challenging issues like boundary delineation and demarcation. The two nations held eight border talks annually between 1980 and 1988, followed by 14 joint working group meetings on the boundary question between 1989 and 2003 and ten rounds of negotiations between their special representatives between 2003 and 2007. Since then, these discussions have resulted in a number of confidence-building measures (CBMs) for preserving calm and peace in respective border regions, as well as two significant treaties that were inked during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India in April 2005. These include the Protocol on Modalities for the Deployment of Self Improvement Efforts in the Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in China-India Border Areas and the Agreement on Political Parameters and General Principles for the Settlement of their Boundary Question. Since

then, however, the relationship between India and the US and China has become more distant [15].

## 7. Conclusion

By agreeing to share the territories they currently control, both parties might end their dispute over the international border. Although it appears like a simple answer, it is actually not the case. Both the nations must publicly acknowledge their acceptance of the current situation and resolve to avoid conflict along previously agreed and settled lines. However, they might not have the cooperation of their various domestic communities, national structures, and foreign actors if they choose this course which is the most significant impediment.

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