

# Periodic Research

## India-China Relations in 21st Century and its Impact on South Asian Politics

### Abstract

India and China are the two powerful nations of Asia at present. Both the countries are playing significant role at international level in relation to their economic and political issues. Border dispute between the two nations has become a major issue for the South-Asian countries and it is influencing South-Asian politics as well. In the present scenario, South-Asia is the central point of international politics. South-Asian countries are the neighboring countries of India. India has seventh place among South-Asian countries in terms of geographical area; China is creating areas of influence in South-Asia. Its interest in South-Asia is purely strategic with India in mind. Due to geographical location of India, the effect of India-China relations can be seen not only on South-Asian politics but also on India's foreign policy. Moreover, it is effecting neighboring countries of India, the India – China relations in 21<sup>st</sup> century and its impact on South Asian Politics has experienced multiple policy actions and changes which are to be focused through this proposed study. Studies conducted so far on India-China relations have especially not taken up the relations in 21<sup>st</sup> century and its impact on South Asian Politics. This has inspired the researcher to take up this study. The relevance of this study also lies in the fact that India-China relations have a very important position in China's over all diplomatic relations, and it will be very important in the future; India-China friendship is the unshakable mainstream. India and China are two most important nations in South-Asia. The role and impact of these two Asian nations cannot be ignored in the regional politics of both South Asia and Pacific Rim. They have succeeded to maintain their domestic and external relations peacefully with some worrying hiccups.

**Keyword:** India-China Relations, South Asian Politics, Pacific Rim, India's South Asian Policy, Chinese strategies for India's Neighborhoods.

### Introduction

India and China, the two Asian giants, account for 35 per cent of total world population and 15 per cent of total geographical area of the world. For more than two thousand years, they had cultural, commercial and ideological link through Buddhism. Now India and China are the emerging superpowers of the world (murugatham, 2011). The complexity of bilateral interactions states to state relationships can be very remarkable. The relationship between India and China is a case in point. India and China are the emerging super powers of the world and together they can make 21st century as Asian century. Immense scope lies for both India and China for constructive and cooperative partnership in various fields. Border problem and Tibet factor are hurdles in the way of India and China smooth relations. These problems require solution on lasting basis if bilateral economic cooperation between the two countries is to be promoted (Pokharna, 2009). The relations between India and China have been strained since both the countries got independence. Both the nations consider each other as a threat to their power projections both at the regional and international level.

### South Asia

South Asia, which comprises eight different countries- India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives is home to over one-fifth of the world's population. The sociological diversity in South Asia is matched by a variety of political systems ranging from an institutionalized democracy (e.g. India) to semi or newly-emerging democracies to systems that often shift between being authoritarian and "democratic." Yet, the region has consistently been described as "the most dangerous place on earth" because the confluence



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of nuclear-armed powers, enduring rivalries, potentially "weak states," and cross-border terrorism. The International Relations of South Asia (e.g., the politics between South Asian states and other world powers) by focusing on the dynamic interplay between identities, interests, and power in the region.

The politics of South Asian states, and the role of international actors in the region, not on the domestic politics of South Asian states unless directly relevant to their inter-state relations.

South Asian countries were under direct or indirect Muslim rule. From the late 18th century the region saw beginning of European Colonial occupation. Parts of modern India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Burma were occupied by Great Britain starting from 1773, when East India Company appointed first representative in Bengal and reaching their zenith in 1886 after the 3rd Anglo-Burma war, ruling till 1947. Nepal, Bhutan & Maldives were protectorates of Great Britain until World War II. In the millennia long history of South Asia, the European colonization period is rather short, but its proximity to the present and its lasting impact on the region make it prominent.

Since 1947, most South Asian countries have achieved tremendous progress in all spheres. Most notable achievements are in the fields of *education*; industry; health care; information technology and other services based on its applications; research in the fields of cutting edge sciences and technologies; defence related self-reliance projects; international/global trade and business enterprises and outsourcing of human resources. Areas of difficulty remain, however, including religious extremism, high levels of corruption, disagreements on political boundaries, and inequitable distribution of wealth.

## India's new South Asian policy

1. The new policy conceives a shared vision of South Asia as a distinct geographical, economic and cultural unit. As South Asia invest towards closer integration, the political boundaries among them would become irrelevant.
2. The second element of this policy is the mildest change towards the border regions of the country, because it is at the border regions that our neighbors have close interaction.
3. The third element of new policy is its over emphasis on the need of developing cross-border connectivity among South Asian countries through highways, railways, air and sea links.
4. The fourth element of this policy is India, it helps to remove the wrong perception held by people about its hegemonistic image. Again, and the democracy and popular participation cannot be held back for long time is the region.
5. Politically, the neighborhood policy is based on the recognition that the development of dense interdependence in the region would better serve India interest in South Asia.

## Chinese policy towards South Asia

China is creating areas of influence in South Asia. Its interest in South Asia is purely strategic with

India in mind. The export of technology and creation of infrastructure in India's neighborhood's largely military-oriented. China is singularly responsible for making Pakistan a 'stand-alone nuclear power', besides continuously arming it with conventional weapons to India's discomfiture. China is increasingly controlling investment and major infrastructure projects in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan. This has been a course of security concern for India. India cannot lose sight of the problem of the Chinese role in South Asia.

## India-China Relations in 21st Century

1. India has consistently viewed bilateral relations with China in a positive spirit. India seeks friendly, cooperative, good-neighborly, and mutually beneficial relations with China on the basis of the five principles to peaceful coexistence, natural sensitivity to each other's concerns and equality. And they can make 21st century as an Asian century. As far 21st century is concerned, India-China relations remained fluctuating. Since then China has been continuously claiming the entire state of Arunachal Pradesh and certain parts of Ladakh region as its own part. China has a massive military presence in Aksai Chin area which seems it has encircled India through many strategic policies and installation and has been testing India's patience by issuing stapled visas to people living in Jammu and Kashmir, repeatedly claiming the border lying territories and intervention in Gilgit-Baltistan region.
2. During this period India and China once again began sharing positive relationship in the geo-economic sphere.
3. Indian Prime minister held talks with visiting Chinese state councilor Tang Jiaxuan on October 27, 2004, and both spoke highly of the bilateral relations between India and China.
4. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India in April 2005, both countries signed and issued a Joint Statement of establishing a Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity and pledging to resolve long standing border dispute and boost trade and economic development between the two rising powers. Moreover, they also signed agreement on Trade, Economic Cooperation and Technology sharing, civil aviation linking major cities of both countries.

Chinese President Hu Jintao visited in India in November 2006 and both the countries agreed that early settlement of the boundary questions will advance the basic interest of the two countries and it should be pursued as a strategic objective. This year was held as "India-China friendship year - 2006". The major outcome of the visit was a 10 point strategy proposed by both the countries in a joint declaration for further development of bilateral relations, Ensuring comprehensive development of bilateral relationship, Strengthening institutional linkages and dialogue mechanism, Consolidation commercial and economic exchanges, Expanding all round mutually beneficial cooperation, Instilling mutual trust and confidence through defence cooperation, boosting cooperation in

science and technology, seeking early settlement of outstanding issues, promoting trans-border connectivity and cooperation, revitalizing cultural ties and nurturing people to people exchange and expanding cooperation on regional and international issues.

1. Subsequently, during the Prime Minister Dr. Man Mohan Singh's visit to China on 13th-15th January 2008, a joint document entitled "A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China" was issued during outlining common positions on a number of international and some bilateral issues.
2. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao paid a three day official visit to India from 15th-17th December 2010. During his visit, six agreements on cultural exchange, green technologies, media exchanges, hydrological data, and banking were signed and a Joint Communiqué were released. During the visit, a bilateral trade target of 100 billion USD was set to be reached by 2015.
3. The year 2012, was celebrated as the year of "India-China friendship and cooperation". Both the countries agreeing that the bilateral relations were witnessed a 'very sound momentum' India and China are also unveiled initiatives to boost cultural exchanges and geo-economic trade contacts.
4. When Indian foreign minister Salman Churched visited China on May, 2013, India and China troops stayed in close proximity to each other and the LAC between Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh region and Aksai Chin was defused on 5th May 2013.
5. The Chinese Primer Li Keying's first foreign visit to India on 18th May 2013 in a bid to resolve border disputes and to simulate economic relations between India-China. The momentum of visits continued as India and China moved ahead in different areas of bilateral relations such as educational and cultural exchanges, science and technology cooperation, trade, security dialogues etc.
6. This period first witnessed a new boom of exchange of high-level visits. Almost in each year, there was a state-level visit between them. Apart from their significance in an overall sense to mutual trust and close cooperation between the two countries, each of these visits made a specific contribution to the improvement of China-India relations.

#### **Sino-Indian Relations-Conflict and Cooperation**

"The rise of China and India will be a force for global prosperity and a force for peace as the two nations pursue the kind of economic and political reform that will enable the journey to continue". By 2025, China and India will account for 39 percent share of global output which is almost equal to present share of US and Europe" (Rathor-2011).



#### **Impact of Indo-China Relations in South Asian Politics**

South Asia as a region has China as one of the giants of Asia in its neighborhood. It shares its boundaries with India, Nepal, Pakistan and Bhutan it is, therefore, logical that importance of this world's largest populated nation which incidentally is not only endowment with man-power but also a backup of military might, technological base and political institution should have an extraneous effect in the region. The role of China as extra regional powers in South-Asia is very important in this context and would form the textual content herein.

1. The immediate threat to any nation arises in its neighborhood. That is why the maintenance of peace, stability and friendship with neighboring states is considered basic to a nation's foreign policy. India's relation with its neighbors is therefore a critical component of its foreign policy.
2. India's neighborhood relations are affected by the regional power dynamic, with external powers seeking to increase their own, and counter the influence of others. At present, one of the biggest challenges before India is to get the confidence of the neighboring countries and ensure political stability in the neighborhood so that they do not fall into the hands of forces inimical towards India, particularly China.
3. India has to ensure a peaceful, secure and stable neighborhood, so as to safeguard peace, security and development within the South Asia region and it is with this perspective India must strengthen its strategic defense and develop cordial relations with its neighbors the way China was doing.
4. India has a firm handle on neighboring Policy, India's aspiration to play a meaningful and constructive role in Asia and the world cannot be realized. A political vibrant neighborhood needs careful nursing at a time of challenging globalization.
5. China policy of containment of India in South Asia is a major challenge to India's foreign policy. China's policy is aimed at counterbalancing and checkmating India's pre-eminent influence in its immediate neighborhood.
6. China has also been cashing on India's lapses in neighborhood and the more India bungles there, the more China gains. Indian policy makers must

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accept the hard reality that the assertion of a rising China in Asia, including in India's sensitive neighborhood, is inevitable and Indian diplomacy has to equip itself strategically, politically and economically to face that reality. Instead of being alarmed at China's policy of containment in the South Asia, India needs to find new ways to win neighbors and increase influence in the South Asia. To counter the move, India is building strong relations with US, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia and Australia.

## China in India's neighborhood

The Chinese New Strategies on the South Asian region have witnessed unique conditions characteristic of its geopolitical aims.

**Pakistan:** China have been a major supplier of arms to the Pakistan Army and actively supported Pakistan's nuclear weapon program since the late 1970s. **Tibet Autonomous Region:** Qinghai-Tibet railway opened, on July 2006, is the world's longest and highest railway from Golmud in Qinghai to Lhasa is 1,142 km long, most of which is located more than 4000 meters above sea level. There are plans to extend the train track South of Lhasa to the Border areas with India and Nepal. **Myanmar** China –built infrastructure in Myanmar includes roads, communication and intelligence network, as well as military facilities. The Myanmar corridor connects Yunnan in South China to the Bay of Bengal. The facility at the Great Coco Island in the Bay of Bengal is especially meant. **Nepal:** Chinese firm, Sino hydro-building the Sikta Barrage in Agaiya district, of Nepal. Its constructions delayed for almost three decades owing to Indian protest. The barrage's distance from Indian border is only 14 km. China is also constructing a permanent road from sikta barrage. **Bangladesh;** China has emerged as major supplier of arms to the Bangladesh armed forces, particularly the Navy. Bangladesh could provide facilities to the Chinese Navy as and when it begins to operate in the Bay of Bengal. **Sri Lanka:** The largest military deal between China and Sri Lanka, amounting to US\$37.6 million. China supplied F7 fighter jets free of cost, artillery guns, armored personal carries (apcs) and infantry weapons. China can forward deploy its naval and air forces, stage rapid action forces, and build facilities for the repair and maintenance to Hambantota.

The Chinese current Strategy of increasing Chinese assertive behavior in India's Neighborhood is a cause of serious concerns it is important for the India Asia that India-China relations are taken forward and long term stability is maintained.

## Conclusion & Suggestions

Undoubtedly, both India and China are two most important nations in Asia. The role and impact of these two Asian nations cannot be ignored in the regional politics of both South Asia and Pacific Rim. They have succeeded to maintain their domestic and external relations peacefully with some worrying hiccups. There is trust deficit between China and India and both sides need to cement bonds of friendship and cooperation. While preserving national security concerns, India and China should afford to

accommodate reasonable demands and dispel apprehensions. Minor irritants should not be allowed to worsen bilateral relations and frequent exchange of high level visits of high profile dignitaries should be utilized to remove irritants.

- The relationship between China and India has become more cautious; per se, with instances of co-operation. Time has come when India will have to craft a new balance of power equation in order to safeguard its core national interest and values.
- The world political discourse is now full of references to the rise of India and China, especially in economic sector. They are emerging giants in world economy. Although their economic relations have increased since last decades yet their entire gamut of relationship is fractious. China's interference in north-east sector is clearly showing that it wants to get control over Bay of Bengal, so as to capture the market for its goods in countries like Bangladesh, Sri Lanka other South Asian nations .
- The unresolved territorial disputes, the rise of Chinese nationalism and its military power and the Chinese strategies for India's neighborhoods also had consequences on the course of India-China relations.
- The India-China relationship would be strong if 'China shows more sensitivity on issues that impinge on our sovereignty and territorial integrity'. Both countries enjoy convergence on vindicating the legitimate interests of developing countries and also establishing a just and reasonable interest of developing countries and also establishing a just and reasonable international, political and economic order.

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