

THE SINO-INDIA TIES AND THE GALWAN VALLEY STANDOFF

RAJAT SHANDILYA

FACULTY OF LAW, ALIGARH MUSLIM UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT: *This is a research article based upon the Sino- India ties and the Galwan Valley issue between India and China. In this article the author has tried to trace the evolutionary aspect of the India China ties with special reference to the Galwan Issue that took place in the recent past and its possible solutions; this article not only provides a brief history of all the landmark happenings between the two countries but also examines them in a proper manner. The author also observes that the diplomacy also has a key role to play in the way of restoration of the friendly ties between the two nations.*

RESEACH QUESTIONS:

1. What are the possible solutions to the Sino-India's Galwan valley standoff?
2. What can be a concise timeline for all the historical landmark happenings among the front of the Indo-Chinese Relations?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

All the research incorporated in this Research Article has been carried out using the 'Qualitative Method of Research.' All the required necessary things are taken into valid consideration and all possible efforts have been made to avoid all the required errors and inculcate all of the authentic Information.

INTRODUCTION: THE BEGINING OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Both India and China (the relationship of which is also known as the Sino-India relations) came into existence around the same time in the span of just around a couple of years i.e. India got its independence on 15th august 1947 from the colonial period and in the same connection and on the same page the people's republic of china was eventually founded by Mao Zedong officially on October 1, 1949. The Sino-India existence can be traced back to almost the same time. The

diplomatic ties between India and china (officially known as People's Republic of China) came to be officially established on 1 April 1950 when India became the first non socialist country to establish diplomatic ties with china. From that particular point of time the Sino-India ties between the two Asian superpowers consistently have maintained a fair diplomatic relations with also certain issues still remaining unsolved on their personal fronts. The period between 1950 to 1958 of the Sino-India relations can be termed as the as the "cursive and cooperative" phase in the relationship between both the countries. As a mark of this cooperative phase the slogan of 'Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai' began to be heard and acknowledged over the Sino-Indian territories and this was all possible due to the efforts of Mao Zedong and Jawahar Lal Nehru as both the leaders had a similar background and a lot of common people to cherish about and this agreement on the ideological front helped both the countries in immense cooperation. In furtherance of the same India-china signed the 'Panchsheela Agreement' which further strengthened India China ties.

THE CONTROVERSIAL TIBET ISSUE BETWEEN THE LION AND THE DRAGON:

Tibet is officially the highest region on earth with an average elevation of about 4900 metres. Tibet is of a quarter size of China. If one looks into this issue from the historical perspective then it can be identified very clearly that historically Tibet had been independent peace loving nation the majority of whose population professed Buddhism as religion. It was in year 1951 that China forced Tibet to sign an agreement what officially called 'The 17 Point Agreement' and officially annexed Tibet in the name of saving the people of Tibet from the western influence.¹ It was however a concern of great misfortune that Tibet issue occupies the core position when it comes to the India-China border issues. Considering the other side of the coin it can be seen that Sino-china relationship saw a sharp decline after 1959 due to their ideological two folds on the Tibet issue. China has always questioned India's stand of giving shelter to the Tibetan spiritual and religious leader and the thing to be noted on this point is that India has never questioned China over the annexation of Tibet through the controversial "17 point agreement". India has time and again made its stand clear that India is a peace loving country and has nothing to do with the political affiliations of his holiness Dalai Lama and his related issues with China historically and provided political asylum to Dalai Lama and his 20,000 followers along with him on humanitarian grounds.

INDO CHINA WAR OF 1962:

¹ Hemant Singh, What is the Panchsheel Agreement between India and China ? Published on 6 July 2020, available at <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/what-is-the-panchsheel-agreement-1594012740-1>

The India-China war can be termed as one of the major unfortunate happening in the global history. One of the chief reasons of war of 1962 was the sharply opposite stands of both the Asian superpowers over the border issues. It should also be noted that India and China have been 2 countries which have experienced friendly relation over more than a past two thousand years.

The long-term confrontation between the two countries caused great drain on the resources of both countries, negatively affecting peaceful development of both countries. Along with the deterioration of China-India relations, relations between China and Pakistan rapidly improved and strengthened, with the result that India had to face a two-front unfavourable strategic environment. Due to the continued improvement of relations between India and the Soviet Union and the formation of an alliance between them, China, whose relations with the Soviet Union deteriorated at that time, also had to face a two-front disadvantageous strategic environment. After the president of Nixon's visit to china in 1972, there emerged in south Asia the confrontation between China, Pakistan and the United States on the one side and India and the Soviet Union (present day Russia) on the other side, giving rise to a serious threat to peace in Asia and the world.

Since the year 1976, the China-India ties gradually got better and experienced greater changes and development in the new century, producing an enthusiastic 'bonus'. Both China and India are two neighbouring countries on a fast rise among newly emerging countries. The friendly cooperation between the two countries would offer an indispensable and important guarantee to their peaceful rise.

CONSEQUENCES OF THE WAR:

After the 1962 war, the India-China relation further deteriorated during the rest of the 1960's and also during the early 1970's. On the other hand China's relations with Pakistan significantly strengthened. Even the PRC (People's Republic of China) backed. Pakistan in the India-Pakistan war of 1965. China also gave their back support to Pakistan in the later wars of 1971 & 1999 also and condemned India in international forums.

The ties between the countries have gone through ups and downs throughout the years but the border dispute is something which China never really tried to resolve because of its expansionist dream of becoming a global power through military might. The border disputes remain constant till date even after the improved diplomatic ties.

If we overlook the border disputes then we can say that from the beginning of the 21st century, the relations achieved a stable line and went on to increase in the trade and business field. However the border disputes arose time and again. Be it in 2006 over China's claim of north-east Indian Territory or the 2017 Doklam faceoff. Although international conditions have changed, India's position vis-a-vis China continues to be relatively stagnant. This might be due to the significant fact that each of the bigger countries proximate to India has one major enemy while India has on its flanks, two major enemies. China considers the Soviet Union its principal enemy and vice versa; Pakistan considers India its major rival but for India both China and Pakistan are major enemies.²

LEGACY OF THE 1962 WAR: George Fernandes, India's defense minister (1998 - 2004) remarked in 1998 that "China is India's number one enemy". Nobody will openly say so in New Delhi in a generally more friendly atmosphere today, but many believe, in private, that Fernandez was and still is right. There is enormous distrust or suspicion towards each other on both sides. Many in the Indian strategic community continue to regard China as a major security threat.⁸ On both sides there are people who still look at the relationship from the prism of the 1962 war. For many Indians, the brief border war in 1962 was a national humiliation. Today India is obsessed with competing with China, hoping to win in the future, in the battlefield or elsewhere. When India launched its indigenous nuclear- powered submarine, INS Arihant, on July 26, 2009, it was hailed as a major breakthrough in the nation's efforts to build a nuclear navy and close the gap with China's growing underwater deterrent capability.⁹ Many Indian officials and scholars harbor deep concerns about China's growing military power and its expanding influence in Asia and beyond. India has yet to move beyond its victim mentality derived from the war and overcome this³

BUSINESS TIES:

From the bilateral trading point of view, India and China both had provided a great and broad market to each other. The business ties were always among the priorities while trying to improve relations. Be it the cross border trade or the sea trade. The year 2004 was the milestone year in the trading ties of India-China as the bilateral trade surpasses the US\$10 billion mark for the first time. Also the re-opening of Nathu la pass was supported with the business reasons. It was also reported that both the

² Sino-Indian Relations Author(s): T. Karki Hussain Source: Economic and Political Weekly , Sep. 18, 1971, Vol. 6, No. 38 (Sep. 18, 1971), pp. 2017+2019-2022 Published by: Economic and Political Weekly Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/4382528>

³ China-India Relations in the 21st Century: A Critical Inquiry Author(s): Zhiqun Zhu Source: Indian Journal of Asian Affairs , June-December 2011, Vol. 24, No. 1/2 (June/December 2011), pp. 1-16 Published by: Manju Jain Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41950508>

countries will hit the US\$100 billion trade mark by 2015⁴. It makes China the largest trading partner of India. Bilateral trade of both countries amounted to approx US\$75 billion in 2014 in which Chinese imports from India amounted to \$6.4 billion while Chinese exports amounted to a whopping amount of \$58.4 billion to India. Bilateral trade has grown by leaps and bounds in the past decade. In 2008, China replaced the United States to become India's biggest trading partner, and India today is one of the top 10 trading partners of China. Bilateral trade reached \$61.7 billion in 2010 from a very low base a decade ago. In 2011 bilateral trade hit an all-time high of \$73.9 billion. (As a comparison, China-Pakistan trade was only \$7 billion in 2008 and \$8.7 billion in 2010, China-Britain trade stood at \$39 billion in 2009 and China-Russia trade was \$38.8 billion in 2009.) Indian and China have agreed a new \$100 billion bilateral trade.⁵ India is a major dump market for Chinese electronic equipments, machines, engines, pumps and organic chemicals etc while Indian products like cotton, precious metals, gems and copper etc find their way in the Chinese market. Since China's speed of development has been a little higher than that of India for a number of years, this has become one of the grounds for some people in India to propagate the 'China threat' theory⁶

THE GALWAN INCIDENT:

The violent faceoff on the night of 15-16 of June which took life of 20 Indian soldiers is the deadliest and one of its kinds ever witnessed. Clashes along border were frequent from the beginning but it was after 45 years that a deadly clash took place along LAC which took life of many soldiers. It was being said that the both the sides suffered casualties but it was PLA soldiers who attacked the Indian soldiers with Iron rods and sticks while the Indian were on their patrolling duty. It was an unprovoked attack. The incident took place at a time when formal talks are going on a Corps Commander level to de-escalate from both sides. India and China both have been in faceoff days before this incident took place. The immediate reason for this was being stated as the construction of a road near Galwan valley by Indian government. However there may be some others reasons too which Chinese government itself would have known better. Apart from its greed to dominate more and more land probably they had tried to establish their military might even by ignoring the mutually signed agreement between both the countries. This incident further dented the relationship

⁴ The Economic Times, 9 February 2012.

⁵ China-India Relations in the 21 st Century: A Critical Inquiry Author(s): Zhiqun Zhu Source: Indian Journal of Asian Affairs , June-December 2011, Vol. 24, No. 1/2 (JuneDecember 2011), pp. 1-16 Published by: Manju Jain Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/41950508>

⁶ SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: Sixty Years of Experience and Enlightenment Author(s): Cheng Ruisheng Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (2010) Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep09358>

between both the countries and resulted in the aggravated emotions from the Indian public. It freshened the old scars of the 1962 war. Masses in India called for the boycott of Chinese apps and goods and also few days after the incident Indian government banned 59 Chinese apps in a sudden move. In a second move the government again banned 118 other Chinese apps on 2nd September. The recent 2020 China-India skirmishes once again deteriorated the bilateral relations to a further low point. And this time the hopes to improve are very less as the China seems not deterred by his antics. It was the fourth standoff since 2013.

TREATIES INVOLVED TO DEAL WITH THE BORDER DISPUTES:

Starting from the year 1962 both the countries have signed various treaties and agreements regarding the mutual cooperation, peaceful coexistence and framework to deal with the border disputes. The well known Panchsheel Treaty (or Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) was signed in April 1954 itself. It states about the mutual cooperation, respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. It also prohibits the nations from interfering in each other's internal matters. Governments failed attempts to resolve the border disputes resulted in the war of 1962 and since then many agreements were signed as confidence building measures to prevent a situation like current one. The most famous is the bilateral agreement of 1996 which prevents the use of guns, explosives and heavy armoury within the 2 K.M of the LAC.

It was reported that on the night of Galwan faceoff the PLA troops attacked with iron bars, sticks with nails, rocks etc as they couldn't bring their guns along the LAC. Many experts said the attack on the Indian troops was well-planned.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS:

Taking about the possible solutions as such there is no fixed solution for this which can resolve all the problems in one go. But the Indian government has to take appropriate steps which makes India's stand fixed and clear. The best possible solution is to resolve the border dispute with the help of International community and clearly demarcating the LAC will prevent such future altercations which became quite common now. Also the China has to accept India's position as a growing economic power and should not view it as a challenge to its rise. Apart from the paper, both the countries have to respect the 'Panchsheel Agreement' in reality. On India's part it is necessary that India has to stand for itself and work for its growth on all fronts. It should establish cordial relations

with other ASEAN powers and gave a strong and clear message of its stand and vision to every nation out there.

CONCLUSION:

The Sino-India relations have always maintained a roller coaster type of relations from the inception of their relations. As it can be traced from the research article itself. However there is a need to improve the relations further, especially after the Galwan faceoff. After the faceoff the relations have seen a sharp decline and retaliation. Negotiation and deliberation is a possible way to restore friendly ties again and work together in a cooperative manner for their respective developments in the global front.

