



RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA: THE PROMINENCE OF TIBET

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Abstract

If relations are to improve between China and India, the future of Tibet must be resolved. Since the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1950, India & China have had a disputed shared border. India has every reason to be worried about China's recent military expansion and infrastructure construction in Tibet. Its purported goal is to alter the flow of rivers in Tibet that flow into India by diversion or damming. Concerns over Tibet, on the other hand, have a significant impact on China's policies toward India. China is concerned that India may exploit the Dalai Lama's stay in India and the large Tibetan refugee population (about 120,000) to generate trouble for China in Tibet, and so far, India has done little to ease these fears. Due to the Dalai Lama and a large number of Tibetan refugees now living in India, the "Tibetan problem" has endured. India, with its open democratic system and long history of offering shelter to persecuted peoples, would find it very difficult to meet China's expectations on the Tibetan problem without a considerable quid pro quo. The current stalemate in talks between the Chinese government & Dalai Lama representatives is reason for alarm. Were it not for the Dalai Lama's efforts to mediate, things may easily become ugly. China's assertive territorial ambitions with regard to India, the deepening of the China-Pakistan partnership, and a shift in China's posture on Kashmir have all contributed to a hardening of India's stance on Tibet. India is seeking clarification on a number of what it considers to be basic issues relating to its right to self-determination & territorial integrity. Untying this knot is essential for healthy relations between India and China.

Keywords: *Alliance, Buffer Zone, Geo-Strategy, Refugees, Territorial Claims.*

Introduction

Harmony and tolerance predominated in Indo-Chinese relations until China took Tibet in 1950. India and China are two of the oldest civilizations that are known to exist on the globe. They also have a rich record of contact with one another on a bilateral and multilateral basis.^[1] Because of its position, Tibet acts as a buffer zone between the territorial claims of China and India. India and China prioritize the defense and security of this mountainous region because of its strategic and political significance.

Tibet is a massive geographic region in close proximity to the Himalayas' wide range. Tibet is home to several mountains that are among the highest in the world. The "water tower of Asia" is another name for this structure. The Tibetan region is characterized by severe drought and receives barely 18 inches of snowfall annually. Compared to other regions in Asia, this desolate geographical area has not produced any significant contributions to the history of Asia. This is because this region's predominant agriculture is subsistence farming, with very little arable land. The hostile geological elements of this region made it a difficult target for foreign invaders since it was not readily accessible. The first recorded contact between Tibetans and Europeans was in 1624, when a missionary from Portugal traveled to Tibet. Russia and other European nations followed in his footsteps in establishing this tie.

The world's major nations, including India, have tacitly and overtly acknowledged China's role in the liberation of Tibet and its subsequent assertion of sovereignty over the Tibetan people. When the highest spiritual leader of Tibetans, the 14th Dalai Lama, was granted political refuge in India along with his supporters at the early age of 24, it caused severe fractures to appear in the ties that had previously been so smoothly established between India and China. Since 1959, Indo-Chinese bilateral ties have been strained to the breaking point. India's stance on Tibet in 1959 led to a significant shift in the geopolitical situation in South Asia and the globe in general. This shift was not only responsible for a reduction in the natural bonhomie between India and China but also resulted in rivalry.^[2] The disturbances and cracks in the global scenario throughout the Cold War era and the internal



conditions in China vigorously influenced Chinese Tibetan policy, which in turn had both hard and soft reverberations in Sino-Indian relations over the course of the last six decades.

Interventions by the Chinese in Tibetan affairs before 1949

One may uncover several accounts of Chinese interference in Tibet from the ancient and medieval eras by searching through the chronicles of history. “There is evidence that a treaty between China and Tibet took place in the 1821–1822 periods. This resulted in establishing the borders between China and Tibet. Lamaist Buddhism was adopted as the official dynastic religion of China throughout both the Yuan and the Qing dynasties.”^[3] In addition to this, they developed close ties with the many Lamaist sects that existed in Tibet. The Qing dynasty made the Tibetan Lamas official instructors and counselors in Tibetan studies. The ascendance of Buddhism has played a vital influence in pacifying Tibetan society and making the Tibetan people reliant on other sources for military help in times of conflict with both internal and foreign adversaries. There is evidence of China’s occasional involvement in Tibet’s defense against Mongolian invasions carried out by the Tibetan military.^[4]

When “Mongolian Dzungars intruded and started to impose themselves in Lhasa in 1717, it led to a counter-invasion in 1719 by force of Manchlis, followed by the first ethnic Chinese military force entering Tibet.”^[5] In 1724, Tibet officially requested China for military assistance in its fight against the Mongols. In 1728, the Tibetan government agreed to provide the Chinese Ambans (residents) with military protection. After then, the Chinese influence in Tibet continued to expand and became more forceful, to the point that “in 1733 the Chinese put a stop to the institution of King and unified both spiritual and temporal power of Tibet under the Dalai Lama.”^[6] In 1790 and 1791, a powerful Chinese army invaded Tibet to launch a punitive war against Nepal. Due to this invasion, China reasserted its sovereignty over Tibet. Following this, the important decision-making processes were routed via the Chinese Ambans. “In 1792, the Emperor published a 29-point document, which too looked to tighten Chinese rule over Tibet. It expanded Ambans’s powers, putting Ambans above the Dalai Lama in responsibilities for Tibetan political issues.”^[7] In China, the Qing dynasty lasted from 1644 to 1911, when it was finally overthrown. The subsequent Nationalist administration considered Tibet’s unique situation and awarded Tibetans the same status as “Manchus, Chinese, Mongols, and Muslims.” This was done to promote harmony. In addition to this, they proclaimed Tibet to be an integral component of the Chinese empire. The nationalist leadership was passionate about establishing full control over Tibet, but both internal strife and external invasion on the part of Japan thwarted their efforts. Later on, China’s involvement in the Second World War, as well as its internal battle with the communists, took its focus away from China.

China’s so-called “Liberation” of the Tibetan region

The importance of Tibet as a strategic location was emphasized by George Ginsburg and Michael Mathias when they made the following statement: “By extension, whoever controls Tibet also controls the Himalayan piedmont, and whoever controls the Himalayan piedmont threatens the Indian subcontinent, and whoever controls the Indian subcontinent may theoretically control all of South Asia, and so all of Asia.”^[8]

As soon as they took power in October 1949, the Communist administration in China, which had replaced the nationalist rule earlier that year, made clear that they intended to pursue their long-held goal of integrating Tibet into China.^[9] Tachienlu, historically considered to be the entrance to Lhasa, was conquered by China in 1950. The communist dictatorship in China initiated a significant project to build motorways linking China and Tibet in the same year. This project was started in the same year. A radio station in Beijing urged the “Dalai Lama to agree to the peaceful liberation of Tibet.” In June 1950, Mao Zedong made public statements regarding China’s impending invasion of Tibet, citing examples of internal unrest and rebellion. These statements were made about Tibet. In August of 1950, General Liu Po-Chang said “that the people’s army would soon be entering Tibet, intending to eradicate the influence of the United States and the United Kingdom. To reestablish Chinese authority in Lhasa, President Yuan Shi-Kai ordered general Yen Chang-Heng, Governor of Sichuan province, to be the Commander — in — Chief of what was named Western Expeditionary troops, and 100,000 soldiers marched to Lhasa.”^[10] On October 25, 1950, “the Chinese News Agency stated that the PLA had gone into Tibet to complete the unification with China and to free the people of Tibet.”^[11]



The Reaction of India to China's So-Called "Liberation" of Tibet

India won its independence from British colonial authority in 1947, and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, almost around the same time. India obtained its freedom from British rule in 1947, and the People's Republic of China was established in 1949. Nehru had highly positive and aspirational views towards the possibility of a strong friendship and cooperative relationship between India and China to promote Asia's overall development and well-being. According to what Nehru remarked in a speech he delivered in 1946, "if the two great powers of the present were America and Soviet Russia, the two powers of the future were certain to be China and India." India and China are two different and ancient civilizations whose "pure aims keep them going" despite the deterioration and detritus they have endured over their respective histories. He continued by saying, "China, that huge nation with a magnificent history, our neighbor, has been our friend over the millennia, and that relationship will survive and develop. We hope that her current challenges will end soon and that she will emerge as a unified and democratic China, which will play a significant role in the advancement of international peace and growth."^[12]

Throughout its history, Tibet has been located in close proximity to India. Since ancient times, the favorable terrain in the Indo-Tibetan boundaries has worked as a positive catalyst for the genesis and development of Indo-Tibetan relations. This catalyst has been there since the ancient period. Around the 9th century AD, Buddhism was introduced to Tibet, and the Tibetan people welcomed and embraced Indian culture, civilization, and heritage with open arms. The spread of Buddhism in Tibet shows this. Despite this, changes in Indo-Sino relations were brought about due to China's conquest of Tibet. India has voiced its opposition to the People's Liberation Army's use of force in Tibet and expressed its hope that the region may one day be granted real autonomy. Following a grueling round of negotiations and discussions, India acknowledged in 1954 that "Tibet is a region of China." The signing of an agreement followed this recognition in the same year that aimed to cultivate and expand bilateral relations and make border trade between India and Tibet easier. The Nehru administration put great confidence in China's conciliatory and tolerant actions and gestures. Based on this, India willingly gave up the unique privileges it had inherited from the British in accordance with the agreement reached in 1904. In addition to creating commercial bureaus in Tibet and India, describing marketplaces traditionally used for commerce, and designating passages and routes, the agreement from 1954 recognized traditions and practices for pilgrimages made by religious believers from India and Tibet to each other's sites.

However, the terrible episodes during the first and second halves of the 1950s put a strain on the connection between India, China, and rebellion. It includes riots in Tibet caused by the Khampa decision, border confrontations, and "India's decision to grant the Dalai Lama" political sanctuary, all of which have caused reverberations among his supporters. This had a significant adverse impact on the China War deal reached in 1954. The Indo-China war incident in 1962 culminated in the agreement's ineffectiveness and inability to operate as intended.

The Indian government's stance on Tibet

The approach that India has taken toward Tibet has always been one that is principled and consistent. According to the well-known researcher J. Garver,^[13] there are four main stages of Indian policy that can be traced in Tibet. These periods are as follows:

- "From 1947 to 1951, New Delhi worked to raise the international stature of the Tibetan administration and put pressure on Beijing not to mobilize their military into Tibet.
- Between 1954 and 1959, New Delhi made an effort to convince Beijing to grant Tibet a significant degree of autonomy and to reduce the size of its military presence in Tibet." It did this by trying to persuade Beijing that there was no need to act in any other way and that the Indian-Chinese friendship would flourish if this goal were achieved.
- From 1962 to 1977, New Delhi encouraged Tibetan independence fighters and organized worldwide opposition to China's policies in Tibet.



- From 1986 to 1999, New Delhi maintained a delicate balancing act between supporting Beijing's requests to limit Tibetan exile activities and approving exile attempts to mobilize international pressure on Beijing to find "a peaceful solution to the Tibet issue."^[14]

After 1947, India upheld the "British policy in Tibet of sustaining the Tibetan buffer while acknowledging China's suzerainty over Tibet." This policy had been in place since the time of the British Empire. But at the same time, India also made efforts to consider the perspectives of Tibetans. "After the Indian delegate stated that India was certain that the Tibetan question could still be settled by peaceful means and that such a settlement would safeguard the autonomy that Tibet had enjoyed for several decades while maintaining its historical links with China and that Tibet's status was undetermined, the United Nations General Assembly decided to postpone the consideration of the Tibetan appeal indefinitely on November 24, 1950. This decision was made after the Indian delegate stated that India was certain that the Tibetan question could still be settled peacefully."^[15] Despite this, India was forced to reconsider its position on Tibet to protect its national interests and ensure its safety. Since the United States decided in 1954 to equip Pakistan, India's defense and foreign industry have been plagued with major concerns. India could not afford to have tensions and conflicts with the two nations bordering it while it struggled to construct a country out of the ruminants of colonial domination. To avoid being hemmed in on both the north and the west, India consented to the provisions of the India-China Accord, which required it to make concessions in terms of Tibet. "Concerning the agreement that took place in 1954, the following was written about it: Agreement between the government of the Republic of India and the government of the People's Republic of China on commerce and inter-course between Tibet area of China and India."^[16] Since Tibet is referred to in this context as a portion of China, it may be deduced that the Indian government considers Tibet's autonomous zone an integral part of China. This resulted in the indirect formalization of the acknowledgment of the Chinese invasion of Tibet and India's noninterference in the same conflict. Relations between China and Indochina remained calm in the years following this agreement's signing. However, this was not an existence that would remain forever. The Chinese government's use of brutality in Tibet incited widespread anti-Chinese sentiment in India. The Tibetan struggle received support from various groups and subcultures within Indian society. "President Prasad's idea that the activities of the Chinese be labeled as a new kind of colonialism was shot down by Prime Minister Nehru". The fact that subsequent notes from the Indian government did not confirm complete Chinese sovereignty over Tibet provoked an aggressive response from China. On November 6, 1950, a note from the Chinese government demanded that India choose between accepting Beijing's unlimited sovereignty over Tibet and engaging in conflict with China.^[17] The culmination of these tensions and warnings was the Indo-Chinese conflict that broke out in 1962.

The conflict in 1962 caused a profound shift in the policy direction of benign tolerance for previously prohibited Tibetan refugee activities. This shift was brought about as a direct result of the war. The Dalai Lama was not stopped from drafting a new constitution for Tibet by the Indian government in 1963. In addition, India started working with the CIA and a Tibetan insurgent organization to assist the Tibetan armed rebellion against Chinese control in Tibet. Additionally, India was instrumental in developing a strong Tibetan armed force.^[18]

However, Since former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China in 1988, there has been a marked shift in India's stance toward China with regard to Tibet. Tibet is an independent region of China, as mentioned in the India-China Joint Press Communiqué from 1988. Anti-China political acts by Tibetan elements are not permitted on Indian Territory. The Joint Statement was issued by India and China^[19] For the record, India's stance was repeated in the "Declaration on Principles for Relations & Extensive Cooperation between India and China signed in 2003 during the visit of India's Prime Minister to Beijing. The Indian side reaffirms that it does not permit Tibetans to participate in anti-China political activities in India and recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China. Following a declaration that "the Indian side does not allow Tibetans to participate in anti-China political activities in India," this acknowledgement is understandable."^[20] India has given its full support to the current talks between Dalai Lama & China's capitals of Beijing. In regards to the Tibetan struggle, the Dalai Lama has commended India's position.

"The Chinese Government's Policy Regarding Tibet"



The Chinese government did “not interfere in the internal affairs of Tibet”, including its administration, language, religion, and culture, in accordance with the agreement reached in 1951, with the exception of issues about international relations and the defense of the country. Tibet had the liberty to maintain its indigenous and traditional religious and administrative organizations inside the physical bounds of (larger) Tibet, such as “the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama.” These institutions included the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama. When Tibetans were forced to go through the communist changes of China in future years, it was a shocking and excruciating experience for them since they had been living under a nearly isolated alternative system for generations. China is implementing a program of repression and domination in Tibet to consolidate its authority over the region and the people of Tibet. During the period of “The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution and The Great Leap Forward in China, Tibetans were the victims of the worst human rights breaches and abuses in the country. Under the slogan of smash old ideas, old culture, old traditions, and old habits, the Chinese government first began its campaign of repression against the Tibetan people. The Red Guards were responsible for the destruction of cultural landmarks. Additionally, thousands of Buddhist monks and nuns were murdered, tortured, and imprisoned during this time.”^[21] The Chinese meddled in “the day-to-day operations” of monasteries and in the establishment of secular schools.

During the decades after Mao Zedong’s death, several social, economic, and political reforms were implemented in Tibet to reduce the level of conflict between “the Tibetan people and the People’s Republic of China.” The communist policies of collectivized farming were discontinued, and individual families were given ownership of the land. Herding and several other jobs were legal options for people to undertake in their spare time. In addition, during this time, political prisoners were freed, an agricultural trade fair was inaugurated, border commerce with Nepal, Burma, and Bhutan was restarted, and the status and property of those persecuted during the reign of Mao Zedong were reinstated.^[22]

During this time, the Dalai Lama traveled to many different countries throughout the globe to raise awareness about the situation in Tibet on a global scale and garner support for the Tibetan cause. For the first time, as a voice of Tibetans living in exile and within Tibet, the western nations opened their platform to the Dalai Lama. This was a significant moment. He was seen as a symbol of resistance to the unjust and repressive rule of the Chinese communist party. Along with pressure from the international community, China became aware of the importance of the Dalai Lama while dealing with Tibet in 1979. The Maoist regime ended, and a more tolerant and progressive Deng took power. These factors combined to force China to resume contact with the Dalai Lama. “In 1979, Deng Xiaoping met ‘the eldest brother of the Dalai Lama, Gyalo Thondup’, in Beijing.’ This meeting was a way for Deng Xiaoping to ease tensions. It was made abundantly plain by the head of the Chinese government that the primary condition for any dialogue was that “the Dalai Lama should recognize Tibet as an integral part of China. In 1987, the Dalai Lama traveled to Washington, DC, to present one peace plan to resolve the Tibetan issue.” The following is a rundown of the five main points of this proposition:

- 1 The establishment of a zone of peace and ahimsa that encompasses the whole of the Tibetan cultural region (which would include the present Tibet Autonomous region as well as the erstwhile Tibetan “province of Amdo and Kham”).
- 2 The end of China’s “practice of population relocation” as a government program (Han people moving into Tibet).
- 3 Freedom of democracy and electoral process, as well as “fundamental human rights, for the Tibetan people.”
- 4 The demilitarization of Tibet and the preservation of the region’s natural ecology.
- 5 The start of serious discussions to finally define Tibet’s final position as a part of the international community.”

Although there were numerous informal exchanges of opinions between China and Tibet, Sino-Tibetan ties were once again pushed to the background when disturbances broke out in Lhasa in 1988 and 1989. Right up to the present day, China has maintained the view that Tibet is now part of the Chinese nation’s extended family and has



been freed of its oppression. As a result, China insists, both directly and indirectly, that the Dalai Lama and other Tibetans who had fled Tibet should return to their homeland and participate in the country's economic growth.

China-Tibet and India after the Year 2000

Regarding Tibet, Sino-Indian relations in the post-2000 era have been replete with ups and downs, with the downswing phenomenon being more noticeable than the upswing phenomenon. Arunachal Pradesh, which according to the "McMahon line, a border set by British imperialists in 1911," is officially regarded to be a part of India, but China considers it to be a part of South Tibet since China does not acknowledge the "McMahon line" as an official boundary. This approach taken by China has severely impacted Sino-Indian ties and has been widely interpreted negatively in the years following the year 2000. "During his visit to China in 2003, the current Prime Minister of India, AB Vajpayee, signed a statement with the then-Premier of China, Wen Jiabao. The declaration was founded on the principle that their mutual interests transcend their differences. On a topic that was difficult to broach for China, India graciously accepted that the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) was a component of the territory of the People's Republic of China (PRC)." By doing so, India accidentally recognized that China had not invaded Tibet in 1950, which contradicted the claim of the Dalai Lama. India's stance in this proclamation was met with great condemnation, particularly since it was taken at the expense of "India's position on the McMahon Line and her associated claims to Arunachal Pradesh." These arguments were founded on the notion that if Tibet was to be viewed as an inalienable part of China, then what should be done about Tibet's involvement in the Simla Agreement of 1914, in which it participated independently?

When Chinese Prime Minister Wen visited India on April 1, 2005, he took advantage of his time there to sign a significant deal. The primary purpose of the dialogues and discussions between Wen and Manmohan Singh was to establish a political framework to resolve the border conflicts. As a result of this diplomatic maneuver, "India came away with the incorrect impression that by agreeing to this formulation, the Chinese had indicated that in any eventual settlement of the boundary alignment in the eastern sector, no major changes would be made from the present LAC alignment that largely follows the McMahon Line."^[23] In 2007, at a meeting with the Indian foreign minister, his Chinese colleague Yang Jiechi asserted Chinese claims to Arunachal Pradesh (Southern Tibet), a misunderstanding about India was cleared up.

The Chinese government has taken increasingly hard stances in recent years towards Arunachal Pradesh, which it refers to as South Tibet. The rapidly expanding defense "relationship between India and the United States," the growing conjunction of Indo-American strategic plans in checking China's growth, and India's waiver by the Nuclear Suppliers Group could all be factors that prompt China to take a tougher stance toward India in regards to Arunachal Pradesh (NSG). In 2009, as a direct result of the Dalai Lama's visit to the Tawang monastery and his public proclamation that Tawang belongs to India, "China chose not to provide visas on Indian passports to inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh." Instead, it issued travel permits stapled into their passports. The level of unease felt by China in relation to the Tawang region in India was so great that the country could not even tolerate the situation "the trips to Arunachal Pradesh made by former Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and current Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2009 and 2015, respectively. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson described these kinds of trips as risky and provocative."^[24]

India's foreign policy has been marked by an abundance of generosity, accommodativeness, and tolerance in terms of its relations with China. In the year 2014, in addition, to "welcoming Chinese President Xi Jinping to Ahmedabad, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi also removed limitations Chinese investments in key areas of the Indian economy, including as ports and telecommunications." In Jammu and Kashmir's Ladakh area, which India claims to be part of its sovereign territory, Chinese troops trespassed and set tents without even showing the basic civility of thanking the kind hospitality that they were shown. This small crisis was followed by a series of disappointing measures by China, which indicated minimal concern for India's sensibilities and policies aimed at resolving conflict: China vehemently opposed "India's application to become a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. blocked India's efforts to designate Masood Azhar, the leader of jaish-e-Mohammed (a Pakistani terrorist organization), to a United Nations Security Council blacklist, China said, despite backing from the council's other



14 members. Jaish-e-Mohammed is a Pakistani terrorist group. Another disappointing move on the part of the Chinese government is the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor across Pakistan-controlled sections of Kashmir". Another issue between India and China is that data on upstream river flow is essential for forecasting and warning in to save lives and reduce material loss, India's disaster management processes are being disrupted as a result of Beijing's refusal to give flood-related information pertaining to rivers that flow through India and have their source in Tibet. These rivers have their origin in Tibet".^[26]

Conclusion

Even though India has maturely refrained from meddling in the affairs of Tibet since the beginning, dating back to 1954, and has diplomatically acknowledged Tibet as an integral part of China, China has not yet responded in the same wavelength to India concerning Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim as being a part of India. This is even though India has maturely refrained from meddling in the affairs of Tibet since the beginning. The presence of the Dalai Lama in India and the fact that Dharmashala, located in Himachal Pradesh, serves "as the seat of the Tibetan government in exile" impedes efforts to settle border conflicts between India and China. Because of this, the matter of Tibet plays a pivotal part in the conversations and debates that take place between New Delhi and Beijing. The border dispute is still ongoing. As a result of revolutionary advancements in information, communication, and technology, the Tibetan cause is experiencing a renaissance and rebirth on a global scale in general and in Sino-Indian ties in particular. When the Chinese government implements further severe and oppressive "measures in Tibet" to maintain control of the situation, mass media communications provide rapid coverage and broadcasting of the events. The leadership of India has made it very clear on several occasions that Arunachal Pradesh is a part of India, to which China has forcefully and negatively responded each time. Because India is home to approximately 128,000 Tibetans (Reuters, 2016), the political and spiritual head of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, resides in India, and the headquarters of Tibet in exile is situated in India. China claims India's Arunachal Pradesh to be its southern Tibet; the issue of Tibet, therefore, remains "a factor in Sino-Indian relations."

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