



## A STUDY ON RELATIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND INDIA IN THE LIGHT OF VAJPAYEE'S 2003 VISIT

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### **Abstract**

*A state visit by a head of state is usually a major event, not something that happens every day. This is especially evident when looking at the timeline of official visits between the two nations; such journeys started in the 90s, and the fourth prime minister of India to go to China was Atal Behari Vajpayee. To justify India's nuclear tests, Vajpayee wrote to world leaders in May 1998. Although Defense Minister George Fernandes took the lead in promoting the "China threat," Vajpayee's support for the idea was clear. But "US President Bill Clinton and Chinese President Jiang Zemin" both denied that India had nuclear weapons and criticized the country's May 1998 nuclear tests for jeopardizing the global non-proliferation framework. Experts from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) started releasing articles criticizing "Indian hegemony" and the rise of the PLA's military force, even though they had previously disregarded South Asia. Also, the many chances for China and India to work together on global projects and engage in substantial bilateral exchanges were seldom ever taken advantage of. Instead of concentrating on one another, the two countries sought to strengthen their political and economic connections "with the rest of the world, particularly the West and the US." This paper must assess Vajpayee's June 2003 visit to China in light of this plan from a realistic perspective.*

**Keywords:** *Diplomacy, Nuclear tests, Non-proliferation framework, Bilateral exchanges, Panchsheel.*

### **1. Introduction**

It is rare for heads of state to make state visits; such visits are reserved for extraordinary occasions. This is especially evident when looking at the timeline of official visits between the two nations; such journeys started in the 90s, and the fourth prime minister of India to go to China was Atal Behari Vajpayee. In October 1954, the phrase was first made by Jawaharlal Nehru, the prime minister of India. He was surprised by the strong emotional response he received from the Chinese people.<sup>[1]</sup> Collectively, Indians felt the emotional toll of the border confrontation in October 1962 and the much-discussed events of 1959–1962. They shattered the PRC-Nehru government's strategy of intentional goodwill intensity. After years of attempts to restore diplomatic "representation in 1976, visits by Foreign Ministers Vajpayee and Huang Hua in 1979 and 1981," respectively, and the establishment of yearly dialogues to exchange views on bilateral, regional, and international matters after that, the long period of disrupted relations was finally ended in December 1988 with Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China. Aside from the lengthy discussions between "Rajiv Gandhi and Deng Xiaoping, Zhu Rongji, and other senior Chinese officials, the following were also announced: two Joint Working Groups (JWGs)" to address the border dispute and encourage investment and trade; three Agreements to collaborate in areas such as science and technology, civil aviation, and cultural exchanges; and the importance of preserving a peaceful environment and building Asian cooperation centred on the Five Principles of Panchsheel, or Peaceful Coexistence.<sup>[2]</sup>

Several Politburo Standing Committee members, "Premier Li Peng, and President Jiang Zemin visited India" between 1991 and 1996. Several high-ranking Indian leaders, including K.R. Narayanan,



President R. Venkataraman, and Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, travelled to China in the early 1990s. As a concrete result of these visits the year 1993, the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control (LOAC) in the India-China border areas was established." This agreement paved the way for meetings and consultations between border defence personnel, "confidence-building measures (CBMs)," and verification procedures to prevent accidental conflict. As a result of the CBM Agreement for the Military Field from 1996, all parties involved in the LOAC have committed to reducing troop deployments and expediting the alignment, as stated in the this article and refraining from using their military capabilities against one another.<sup>[3]</sup>

The years that followed saw a resurgence of divergent views on national security and a shocking lack of interest in and understanding of one another, even among educated Chinese and Indians, rendering any potential intangible benefits of greater awareness and sensitivity to one another's concerns moot. "The self-proclaimed Indian strategic community, including officials and non-officials alike, had already bought mainly into a China threat thesis by the time the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) alliance took office in 1998." The idea was derived from China's position as a nuclear weapon state, its designation as a "Great Power," and its role as "a permanent member of the UN Security Council (P-5)." India was worried that China would try to encircle or intimidate it because of its rapid economic development, military modernisation, nuclear technology supply links with Pakistan, and increasing activity and presence in India's other neighbours, especially Myanmar. In May 1998, Vajpayee wrote to foreign leaders to defend India's nuclear tests. "While Defense Minister George Fernandes" was the most vocal advocate of the "China threat," it was evident that Vajpayee shared this view. However, "President Jiang Zemin of the People's Republic of China and President Bill Clinton of the United States both refused to acknowledge the fact that India is a nuclear weapons state and condemned India's nuclear tests in May 1998 as endangering the worldwide non-proliferation framework."<sup>[4]</sup> Though they had previously ignored South Asia, experts from "the People's Liberation Army (PLA)" began publishing writings criticising "Indian hegemony" and the expansion of the PLA's military might. At the same time, the vast opportunities for extensive bilateral exchange and international collaboration between China and India on shared interests were seldom explored. Rather than focusing on each other, the two nations attempted to forge tighter "political and economic ties" with the rest of the globe, emphasising the West and the United States. In light of this outline, Vajpayee's trip to China in June 2003 must be evaluated.

## 2. India and China's Comparability

The similarities and differences between China and India in their foreign relations have fascinated me for a long time. Because one's own and other people's views impact the fairness of diplomatic encounters, it also impacts bilateral ties. India and China are pretty similar in many ways. They both want to be big nations and face global difficulties. They both are proud of their old and great civilisations and have dealt with modernity and the influence of the West in different ways. Beyond the noticeable difference in political systems, which pits China's unitary structure under the control of the still-authoritarian Communist Party (CCP) against India's multiparty parliamentary democracy and federal structure, there are other notable differences between the two modern democracies. We will focus on the significance "of perceptions in international relations and ignore the similarities and differences between traditional Indic and Sinic civilizations. While India and China are contemporary "nation-states," they vary in five main ways."<sup>[5]</sup>

Mao Zedong and the 'liberation' of 1949 solidified China's long-standing and robust "self-projection of being a united state with a defined territory and centralised administration," which is addressed in the first statement. Conversely, Indian nationalism was more often articulated in social and cultural rather



than geographical and political terms. Secondly, the PRC is well-known for its "strategic" thinking, which entails creating and implementing policies with a precise aim, even when these decisions are entirely incorrect. It is notable that succeeding administrations in independent India often make impromptu and disjointed choices while dragging their feet in executing even long-standing policies. Beijing usually states broad ideals like "the Five Ideals of Peaceful Coexistence and 'no first use' of nuclear weapons." Still, it "interprets them 'pragmatically' according to current conditions," leaving them 'pragmatically' according to current conditions, which leaves a lot of space for misinterpretation. While New Delhi seldom says "doctrines," it has used vague words like "suzerainty," "autonomy," and "no first use" that others may take another way. To sum up, the English spoken in China and India is different.

At every meeting, a fourth distinction becomes apparent. Everyone in China, from top officials to regular citizens, seems to agree on one thing, even if there are subtle differences in opinion throughout the ranks and pressure groups like the PLA that have different amounts of sway over policy decisions.<sup>[6]</sup> On the other hand, Indians' diverse and vocal opinions are honest, even while pluralism might mask a genuine national agreement on some issues. Lastly, the PRC's readiness and capacity to separate itself from the global community and "stand tall" under Mao's leadership has undoubtedly aided "Mao's successors in negotiating relations with the West." After India gained independence, its leaders actively participated in the liberal international order and treasured their ties to the West intellectually and otherwise. This led many people, both at home and abroad, to believe, without all the evidence, that India is psychologically dependent on the West and so susceptible to Western pressure.<sup>[7]</sup>

Along with the distinctions above, five factors highlight the similarities between India and China's national difficulties and ambitions of India and China. They both want to get over the shame of colonisation, first and foremost. Naturally, the question is how. Secondly, they both want to be acknowledged as separate authorities and decision-making centres. Accordingly, in the age after "the Cold War, when the United States has become the dominant global power," both may agree that a multipolar world is desirable. But there's no proof that everyone can agree on where to put the poles or how to build this utopian society. The third point of convergence is China and India's apparent desire for regional dominance. However, the term "region" is not always easily defined, and it is instructive to look at how Beijing and New Delhi have interacted "with all of Asia, particularly with Southeast and Central Asia," which were 'shared neighbourhoods' before modern times and maybe again.<sup>[8]</sup>

The apparent goal of both nations is to better the lives of their massive people via social and economic growth. They have approached this from many angles, and the outcomes have been varied. There is too much material to quote it all here in the existing literature. However, experts agree that by the end of the century, China had exceeded India in terms of national power and riches, except political freedom and individual choice. Fostering amicable and cooperative connections with other political and economic power centres, notably "the United States and the European Union, Russia, and ASEAN," is the sixth point of agreement between contemporary China's and India's foreign policy. There is a major imbalance in the bilateral connections between the US, China, and India due to the existing and future engagements between the two nations. This is because both countries are cautious about the other's prospective proximity to the United States.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **3. Vajpayee Visit Accomplishments**

Government officials and influential citizens are quickly energised to learn as much as they can about the host nation before a high-level visit so that they may be well-prepared for the visit and its



anticipated outcomes. During the summer of 2003, prominent Indian publications published articles about China, while the official Chinese press published columns about India. The two nations' Foreign Offices also took great care in crafting "the three-and-a-half page Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India," which was "jointly released in Beijing on June 23, 2003," to lessen the possibility of future misunderstandings. Even though it is not a legally binding treaty but rather a framework agreement, the statement shows that the two countries have come a long way since their 1998 mutual scepticism.<sup>[10]</sup> By the year's end, China had already begun reassuring India via Ambassador Zhou Gang and Professor Deng Junbing, his successful and influential wife. Both Brajesh Mishra, India's national security adviser, and Special Envoy Jaswant Singh have previously rejected the fact that their respective countries were a danger to one another. Furthermore, in 2002, "Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji led a long and cordial mission to India to further establish economic and trade ties. The common interests of the two sides outweigh their differences," the Joint Declaration from June 2003 stated directly, expressing pleasure with this development. Neither country poses a danger to the other. One party's use or "threat of force" against another is strictly forbidden.<sup>[11]</sup>

According to the lengthy declaration, "India and China have a mutual desire for good neighbourly relations and have broad common interests" in many areas, including but not limited to fostering economic and social development, preserving global and regional peace and stability, improving the quality of their bilateral relationship across the board, and fortifying multi-polarity on the worldwide stage. The two countries have also committed to resolving their differences "through peaceful means in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner." This includes holding annual meetings, increasing trade and economic cooperation, fostering understanding and trust between their militaries through broad defence exchanges, and working together more effectively at "the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other multilateral institutions" to help developing nations.<sup>[12]</sup>

"After seven years of fruitless discussions at the vice-ministerial level, Rajiv Gandhi finally agreed to remove India's demand for a border resolution before expanding ties with China in 1988," resolving the most contentious issue between the two countries. As part of their efforts to clarify the LOAC in the 1990s, the two governments met as expanded JWG's and eventually exchanged maps of the least contentious middle sector, progressing to the more contentious western sector while keeping the peace. "Vajpayee and his Chinese hosts emphasized the need of clarifying the LOAC and preserving peace and quiet in 2003, but they also moved swiftly to "appoint a Special Representative to explore the framework of a boundary settlement" from the political standpoint of the wider bilateral relationship."<sup>[13]</sup>

In an effort to advance toward a border settlement, two special representatives—Brajesh Mishra, India's "national security adviser, and Dai Bingguo, China's vice minister—met in secret in October 2003 and March 2004." After India had approached the boundary from a geographical, historical, and legal perspective, China had used force to resist it. Clarifying the LOAC was an important but challenging technical undertaking, but it was only going to be there for a limited time. Vajpayee achieved his goal by openly recognising the need for a politically negotiated, long-term border solution. The failure of his administration and the Congress-led government of his successor, Dr. Manmohan Singh, to seek domestic agreement among political parties and the general public on an appropriate border form undermines the significance of that accomplishment. The Parliamentary resolution passed in 1962 prohibiting the alienation of India's "sacred soil" has also remained unrepealed or invoked. The Chinese side has also been vague on a politically acceptable stance, and "the 'package deal' of exchanges" purportedly proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1981 and Zhou Enlai in



1960 has long since been too laden with conditions to be believable. Neither nation is likely to cede control of area that is now under its jurisdiction. Nevertheless, if the initial commitment made in “the Joint Declaration of June 2003” is to be respected, it is reasonable to anticipate that the LOAC will be clarified, maps will be exchanged, and talks on a mutually agreeable boundary will continue simultaneously, although at a slower pace.<sup>[14]</sup>

“A Memorandum on Expanding Border Trade was also signed during the Vajpayee visit. This followed the 1991 deal that had opened two routes via Shipki La near Simla and Lipulekh La on the western Nepal-India border,” which had allowed for the resumption of border trade. Although the statistical significance of border commerce along these routes is negligible, it has a profound impact on “the lives of those living in the Himalayan area.” One example I have is from 1994, when I was walking over Lipulekh Pass on a tiny pony road and stopped to ask a local in the mountain town of Gunji, who was installing solar panels on his newly constructed home, where all the money had gone. “Tibet khul gaya” (Tibet has been opened), he said with a wide smile, clearly remembering the prosperous market of before 1962.<sup>[15]</sup> In 1993, a third eastern route was considered but never proclaimed; this was likely due to China's reluctance to give India the official acknowledgment of Sikkim as an integral part of its territory. The possible origins of this route were West Bengal or Sikkim. “By agreeing to offer Nathu La (in Sikkim) as an additional pass for border commerce,” the 2003 Memorandum on Expanding Border commerce finesses the problem. The border trade marketplaces in China's Tibet Autonomous Region and India's Changgu are located in the respective states of Sikkim and Tibet, respectively. Not only has the agreement obtained the tacit “Chinese recognition of Sikkim as an Indian state,” but significant state maps presently printed in China depict Sikkim as part of India, following international practice. However, the establishment of customs stations and checkpoints at proper sites is still pending. The Chinese Foreign Ministry website has corrected its list of autonomous nations to remove Sikkim, but no official notification has been made. (Sikkim was acknowledged by China in 1890 as “a Protectorate of British India; by treaty in 1950, it was reaffirmed as a Protectorate of independent India;” and it was only in 1974–1975 that it was united into the Indian Union.)

While some Indians felt that the Joint Declaration went too far by stating, “The Indian side recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the Peoples Republic of China and reiterates that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India,” “this statement merely reflects a reality that previous Indian governments had already accepted, and it was discussed extensively in New Delhi with the Dalai Lama and his advisors before being signed in Beijing.” It does not explicitly acknowledge Sikkim's integration, and some Indians feel that Vajpayee went too far in his criticism. On this occasion, in contrast to previous ones, the “Chinese side expresse[d] its appreciation for the Indian position.” In addition, the “Dalai Lama's delegations in December 2002 and early June 2003 were warmly welcomed in Beijing, thus maintaining the possibility of a negotiated settlement between them.” Tibet and Arunachal Pradesh were both visited by senior military delegations from China and India, respectively, in recent exchanges. Maybe the opposing side's resolute control in border regions pleased both sides. Avoiding miscommunication and confrontations, like the ones that broke out in the eastern sector at Sumdorong Chu in 1986–1987, is one of the primary goals of direct military-to-military interactions. There have also been direct military-to-military encounters between “the PLA Navy and the Indian Navy.” In addition to the official and very restricted port visits that Chinese and Indian warships undertook in the 1990s, a modest Joint Naval Exercise called “search and rescue” was undertaken in “the South China Sea in November 2003.” Although these actions have not resolved Indian concerns about “Chinese naval plans and actions in the Cocos Islands or Chinese disapproval of Indian dominance in the Indian Ocean, the two countries' governments” have acknowledged the



necessity of a mutual understanding between their fleets in order to protect their maritime commerce from pirates and maintain open sea lanes of communication. General Cao Gangchun, the Chinese minister of defense, visited Western Naval Command in Mumbai on his March 2004 visit to India with the goal of enhancing military-to-military cooperation.

Two of the world's most rapidly expanding economies are those of China and India. Their mutual distrust and divergent developmental trajectories are starkly shown by the low amount of investment and commerce between them. In June 2003, the Joint Declaration stated: "Both sides shared the view that existing complementarities between their two economies provide an important foundation and offer broad prospects for further enhancing their economic relations...[And] will take necessary measures...to remove impediments to bilateral trade and investment."<sup>[16]</sup> Consequently, during Vajpayee's visit, nine Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) were signed. One of these related to judicial cooperation, one to "renewable energy cooperation, one to simplifying visa procedures (without which people-to-people interaction in any area would remain very difficult), and one to remove impediments to bilateral trade and investment."

Trade between India and China was only \$265 million in 1991, but by the end of 2003, it had risen to \$6 billion and was still going strong. The US\$10 billion target set by Zhu Rongji in 2002 has already been surpassed. Despite the relative smallness of the two countries' trade baskets—less than two percent of India's and half of China's, respectively—and the need to diversify beyond conventional import and export practices, the growth rates have been rapid. Indeed, the volume of commerce between the two countries reached \$12.6 billion in 2003 and 2004.<sup>[17]</sup> Both governments and theorists anticipate that trade would support and solidify better political ties, which traders hope will lead to more trade.

In 2003, Vajpayee was joined by an outstandingly "large business delegation from the Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) to investigate the likelihood of investment and joint venture opportunities in China." Efforts by the CII to educate Indian businesspeople and policymakers about China in the 1990s met with mixed results. Because of China's reputation as a dangerous nation, Indian corporations are understandably wary of doing business there. Not only was Ranbaxy Laboratories Limited a pioneer in the pharmaceutical industry, but it had also solidified its position in China by hiring Chinese and Indians who spoke Chinese since the 1980s. Interest from Indian businesses in China increased as China negotiated membership in "the World Trade Organization (WTO), of which India is a founding member," and as it harmonised its domestic commercial regulations with international standards. Even before Vajpayee's visit, Shanghai was a popular destination for banking and finance professionals, IT entrepreneurs, and software developers. "A mix of Indian software and Chinese hardware will be almost irresistible to the global market, as Zhu Rongji had said in 2002 in Bangalore. Ratan Tata, chairman of Tata, was named Honorary Economic Advisor to the Chinese city of Hangzhou in 2003, and by the same year, Infosys, the Tata Group, Bank of India, and State Bank of India were all investing in China." Although these advancements are much appreciated, they are just baby steps. Even though it encompasses the ten poorest provinces and autonomous territories in China, "including Tibet and Xinjiang (which border India) and are overseen from Chongqing," the Western Development Project has not yet attracted Indians. This lofty endeavor was heavily promoted by high-ranking Chinese officials during the "China and the World in the 21st Century conference that took place in Beijing in September 2003. Unlike the former heads of government or government departments" from Europe and Australia who had strong ties to their countries' financial centers, the



only two Indian delegates, an academic and me, had no such connections and were completely unsupported by businesses.

Similarly, while Indian academics and Chinese businessmen were enthusiastic about the Kunming Initiative, which aimed to connect “the economies of Yunnan (a 'hub' for a growth triangle in southwest China and Southeast Asia), Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the Northeastern States of India in the 1990s,” Indian businessmen were still hesitant to get behind the initiative. Reasons for this oversight likely include a lack of mainstream investment from India in “the Northeastern States and a security” attitude among authorities stemming from long-standing concerns of any new Chinese involvement in the area and the PRC's history of supporting rebels. Furthermore, Indian businesspeople are less enthusiastic about the Hainan Forum than Indian academics and ex-officials, despite the forum's stated goal of bridging the economic gap between China, India, and ASEAN nations. The absence of cross-continental infrastructure, such as roads, “railways, or banking facilities, along with Indian discontent with the performance of Chinese construction contractors <sup>[18]</sup> and the ongoing political ambivalence in Bangladesh regarding the topic of substantial economic cooperation with India,” are preventing New Delhi from making significant progress with its Mekong-Ganga Cooperation plan.

The goal of Vajpayee's visit was to improve economic relationships between India and China by highlighting the two nations' complementary strengths rather than their competing ones. These endeavors may bring to a modern-day resurgence of the prosperous commerce that characterized the old southern Silk Road, which stretched over both land and water. To what extent India's "Look East" strategy, which it launched in the early 1990s, and its dynamic economy live up to their promise is a major question mark. China, however, has extended a “free trade agreement to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and made great strides in connecting its enormous economy and marketplaces with those of Southeast Asia.” There, it has no qualms about facing Indian rivals. “The two sides supported multilateral cooperation in Asia, believing that such cooperation promotes mutually beneficial exchanges, economic growth as well as greater cohesion among Asian countries,” reads the actual passage from the 2003 India-China Declaration of Principles. “Participation in regional and international cooperation” procedures in Asia by both parties was seen favorably.

“India and China have been consistent in their actions with the Declaration of Principles,” which states: “The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation at the WTO, which is not only to mutual benefit but also in the broader interest of developing countries.” “At the Fifth Ministerial Conference in Cancún that year,” they reached a consensus with Brazil and South Africa, among other countries, to urge developed economies to eliminate or drastically cut farm subsidies and to fight against attempts by these economies to attach other issues to trade negotiations. This came after regular dialogue with other countries. The US, EU, and Australia extended invitations to Brazil and India to participate in separate talks to reach an agricultural accord after the August 2004 Geneva agreement—which was hailed as a success for both developing and wealthy nations—. China and India face significant rural-urban mobility and poverty; hence, neither country can afford to open its markets to the products of Western agro-conglomerates, lest it cause societal unrest. For the most part, they rely on agriculture as a means of livelihood. It was unusual for China to take and maintain a common position on the topic within the WTO, in contrast to their 1996 departure from the "Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty" talks in Geneva to obtain a privileged position as a P-5 state.

During Vajpayee's visit to China, other agreements were signed to foster collaboration and information sharing between Chinese and Indian educational institutions, scientists, and technicians in many domains, such as ocean research, as well as the energy and water resources ministries. As an



advantage of the second deal, China warned India that the Sutlej and Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo), two of the world's most important rivers, would likely see their water levels increase, posing dangers to the downstream regions. The development of these hazards was induced by ambitious Chinese undertakings in Tibet and natural circumstances.<sup>[19]</sup> However, “in contrast to the unforeseen but comparable scenario in 2000, which caused enormous damage,” certain preventative steps could be done in India thanks to knowledge that was transmitted in time. But if China tries to redirect rivers in Tibet northward, it may have disastrous ecological effects.

Beginning in 2003, student, research, language instructor, and educational administrator exchanges have the potential to lessen the degree to which Chinese and Indians know each other's countries and, over time, to foster friendly “relations in civil society as an alternative to business and commercial interests. While allowing the specifics to be worked out at a later date, the two countries also agreed to establish cultural centers in New Delhi and Beijing.”

#### **4. Ongoing Difficulties and Future Prospects**

Above, we saw how Vajpayee's visit benefited the India-China relationship in concrete ways and hinted at its future intangible advantages. However, there are several obstacles that prevent the relationships from being really strengthened. The greatest obstacle is the long-lasting distrust that has its roots in the events of 1959–1962, which has been further deepened by the Cold War developments starting in 1971. At the time, China was seen by India as allied with the Soviet Union, while Pakistan and the US were seen by China as linked enemies. The fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end of the Cold War did much to lessen, but not eradicate, levels of mistrust. Pakistan has been consistently antagonistic toward India and has been waging a low-intensity conflict in Kashmir since 1989, fueling two fears in India that are based on China's well-documented supply of nuclear technology, missiles, and ammunition to Pakistan.

The first is India's low international standing and the possibility of nuclear intimidation or blackmail from a stronger country. Second, outside backing that changes the power dynamic on the Indian subcontinent, promotes Pakistan's adventurism, and hinders Islamabad's acceptance of reality on the ground constitutes an external danger. Those who stress this danger are unconvinced by China's claims that all South Asian countries should strive for amicable ties and that military transfers are a component of sovereign governments' rights. Furthermore, they are not impressed by China's changing position on Kashmir, which started in 1965 with open (though verbal) support for Pakistan, went on “through 1996 with Jiang Zemin saying that unresolved disputes can be set aside while building broader relations,” refused to support or endorse Pakistan's daring incursions into Kargil and reiterated the sanctity of the Line of Control in Kashmir, and finally emphasised the bilateral nature of the dispute and the need for a peaceful resolution in 2016.

Contrarily, Pakistan's recurrent military confrontations at different levels, along with the strong China-Pakistan nexus, effectively tie down India and prevent it from becoming an Asian Great Power. India is unable to participate in the Shanghai Cooperative Organization due to Pakistan's unstable government and strategic position, which also prevents it from accessing Central Asia's oil and gas reserves. New Delhi also views China's diplomatic and economic engagements “with South Asian countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar” as proof of Chinese encirclement of India and malicious intent. China finds it simpler to accuse India of “hegemonism” and strengthen its “own presence on the subcontinent” when such ideas are publicly stated inside the Indian security establishment, which comes as no surprise. China has long maintained a tenuous alliance with Pakistan; however, this will only stop being “a threat to India once Pakistan and India normalize their





own relationship along reasonable and non-hostile lines,” which is unlikely to happen anytime soon. This is despite China's official support for SAARC.

A lot of factors, including the quantity and quality of China's warheads, the number and placement of its missiles, and the vagueness of China's "no first use" (NFU) statements, go into determining the extent to which China poses a nuclear danger to India. Beyond these considerations, there are issues about the relative standing and potential of nuclear CBMs and discussions. On a bilateral level, China has persistently refused to address even the smallest nuclear issue with India, much alone CBMs or mutual NFUs. Secret bilateral security discussions between India and China have been in the works since 1998, when India publicly tested nuclear weapons. In both public and private meetings with their Chinese counterparts, “Indian officials and non-officials” have been more forthcoming with challenging inquiries on China's nuclear proliferation efforts since then. In addition, China's capabilities are evidently considered in India's developing policy of “minimum nuclear deterrence” and the Agni III indigenous missile.” The terrible reality of international relations after 1945—and especially since the Non-Proliferation Treaty's indefinite extension in 1995—is that having nuclear weapons is seen as a symbol of power and status. Maintaining the status quo is important to “the P-5, all of which are governments with nuclear weapons.” The United States and China consistently reject “India's request for a permanent membership on the Security Council,” while the other three members of the P-5 have offered rhetorical support. Vajpayee attempted to have China back India's claim in June 2003, but all that was included in “the Declaration of Principles was this brief paragraph:” “The two sides acknowledged the vital importance of the United Nations in world peace, stability and development.” Their focus on enhancing the UN system will not waver. They both said that they are prepared to collaborate in order to overhaul the United Nations. Improving poor nations' participation on the UN Security Council should be a top goal in any reform effort. There are several inconsistencies and unknowns surrounding the so-called worldwide non-proliferation system around the nuclear issue, which extends far beyond the realm of India-China relations.

The amount of suspicion between China and India is distinct and more localized in China, and this is for a good reason. Because of the Dalai Lama's tremendous worldwide and indigenous prominence and the fact that he lives in India, suspicion stems mostly from Tibet. Since the Sino-Indian border conflict is still unresolved, Chinese officials are understandably wary of any foreign “interference” or promotion of “splittism” in Tibet. As part of its preparations for “local wars” in the 1990s, the PLA considered potential outcomes in Tibet. Even with Vajpayee's direct remarks cited before, such concerns could still persist.

“The United States and the prospect of a robust relationship between the United States and India” provide far bigger obstacles for China. Although China has enjoyed a relatively benign security environment since the early 1990s, the country's policymakers are nonetheless apprehensive about “encirclement” or “containment,” especially when disguised as “engagement.” To prevent a further tightening of the noose, China has taken diplomatic and military measures. According to Allen Whiting<sup>[20]</sup>, the fear of encirclement was a factor in China's 1962 invasion of India, which had some “assistance from the United States and the Soviet Union.” In the mid-1990s, he had a lower level of PLA threat assessment toward Russia and India as opposed to “the United States-allied Taiwan and Japan.” As the Bush administration and the BJP-led Indian government began praising democracies as “natural allies” and striving to form a “strategic partnership,” the usual apathy of Chinese strategists toward India was abruptly stopped. Radical conservatives in India and the United States speculated about a “China threat” that they might counter together, but their rhetoric led to nothing in the way of



concrete steps. And because China's ties with the US are clearly stronger and tighter than India's, it's likely that Beijing views India as less of a danger.

Thirdly, although this is not exclusive to China, confusion with India's complex political system, economics, and society could contribute to skepticism of the Indian government. Even for native Indians, it's not easy to make predictions about India; only the bold dare to do so, and they're not afraid to be incorrect. The seeming ease with disarray in Indian culture bewilders the Chinese, who value order so highly. Also, the Japanese academic Nakamura showed a long time ago that Sanskrit supported abstract thought while Mandarin helped with concrete, practical thinking. Although the inherent cultural and institutional differences between China and India will make collaboration between the two countries challenging, the fact that they are working to overcome these obstacles is encouraging for the future of their joint ventures.

So, what about the not-too-distant future? If China does not recognize and accept India's supremacy in South Asia and its growing influence throughout Asia, or if India does not conform to "China's dominance and pre-eminence as the Asian power in all of Asia, including Southern Asia," then, according to renowned scholar John Garver's predictions, "protracted conflict" will persist.<sup>[21]</sup> Although Garver makes some valid points, his arguments will not sway anybody who does not believe in the hard realist idea of constant war between states in a global system characterized by anarchy. Both existing and future global powers face a myriad of security challenges in the ever-changing global landscape that has emerged after the Cold War. Especially in this day and age of nuclear weapons, a military confrontation is not the best nor the exclusive way to resolve such problems. Despite their animosity, neither India nor China's fundamental interests are in jeopardy. Predictions of a drawn-out Sino-Indian conflict strike me as too gloomy.

In contrast, there are sentimentalists and romantics who long for the days of the Hindi-Chini bhai bhai that were long gone, when the ties between the two countries lacked substance. Some more pragmatic proponents of Chinese-Indian cooperation are also "realists" in the sense that they advocate for the tried-and-true balance-of-power strategy: a coalition of the four superpowers—China, Russia, India, and Iran—to "balance" the United States' hyperpower and bring about the multi-polar world order that their leaders seek. Moscow has been the source of these trilateral initiatives, which have been well-received enough in Beijing and New Delhi to warrant the organization of and participation in related discussion sessions. Theoretically, "balancing" makes sense, but in practice, there's a clear push in all three capitals to "band-wagon" with the United States' stronger might while protecting fundamental areas of sovereignty. "Even if the new Indian government has the support of communist parties, it seems improbable that the two Asian powers would unite to confront the United States in the new hypothetical strategic triangle."<sup>[22]</sup> This is because each Asian power would likely prefer to strengthen its own ties with the United States while weakening the other's.

"There are a lot of other realists who look at the theoretical" challenge of controlling China's growing influence and predict that it would become uncontrollable or unpalatable beyond 2020. To prevent a major confrontation in the future, many of them want the United States to take strong action against China right now. As an anti-China alliance or coalition, several of these thinkers—along with hawks and thriller authors of all stripes—suggest include India, thanks to its formidable military might and expertise. Also, as a work of fiction, this scenario seems more interesting to me than as a blueprint for state policy.<sup>[23]</sup> U.S.-Indian ties are beyond the purview of this article, but drastic changes would be required to pave the way for such an alliance. "China is India's biggest neighbor; the two countries want to be friendly and cordial, and India would be wise to stay neutral in any dispute between China and a third party."



The most likely outcome of India-China ties is the one that follows from the principles and commitments that were unanimously adopted “during Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003. It was clear that both administrations were sensible and realistic.”<sup>[24]</sup> The Chinese leadership and political system do not seem to be about to undergo a dramatic shift anytime soon, and the 2004 Indian government change was an inevitable consequence of the country's multiparty democratic system; it poses no threat to the system or to the widely accepted principles of Indian foreign policy. While concurrently involved in a variety of cooperative and competitive endeavors, India and China are expected to approach problem-solving in a gradual and systematic manner.<sup>[25]</sup> Neither country wants to cause a stir because it values stability, peace, and economic growth opportunities too highly. Without a doubt, this is a hopeful outlook, although maybe not one excessively so.

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