



## AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: EXAMINING THE PROS AND CONS

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### **Abstract**

*Relations between India and China are becoming more interwoven because both countries are the biggest and most quickly developing powers in current world politics originating from Asia. The same civilizational base, the desire to modernize, and the aim to recover their status as major powers in international affairs are the apparent parallels that characterize this symbiosis. Concurrently, several issues have a negative impact on ties. The most notable are the long-standing territorial disputes, the frictions over regional hegemony, and the more critical diplomatic tensions, the most obvious of which center on the relationships between "India and the United States and Pakistan and China," respectively. This allows us to see the relationship between China and India as a "double-edged sword," where both sides may be seen as contributing to the partnership's beneficial and harmful outcomes. This paper aims to analyze how New Delhi and Beijing's strategic aims are often both convergent and divergent simultaneously. It does so by examining the historical foundations of such a fundamental dynamic and its present reality throughout the previous seventy-five years of interactions between the two capitals.*

**Keywords:** *China, Galwan, India, Threat perception, Multipolar, Security dilemma.*

### **Introduction**

As the two most significant and most rapidly expanding Asian nations in global affairs today, India and China are finding their relations increasingly intertwined. From a shared historical view of both states as great civilizations of systemic importance to a shared desire among "their leaders—and increasingly their populations—to restore their status as great powers in the international system," apparent similarities characterize this symbiosis. Both states share a common historical perspective for being major civilizations of systemic importance. "India and China currently hold some of the world's most considerable territorial, demographic, economic, and military capabilities," further underpinning similar heritages and perspectives. Western powers' shared historical experiences of severely unfavorable colonial intrusions support common heritages and perspectives. "A single goal is to achieve increasing levels of bilateral, regional, and global commerce, which helps to augment their strength across all areas of international affairs effectively. The two entities are also galvanized together by a collective commitment to modernization and development policies, which also serves to galvanize them together."<sup>[1]</sup>

Both nations are now more influential than ever in international diplomacy due to the quick growth of their economies in the last several decades. Still, Beijing's ascent has been longer & more rapid than New Delhi's. It is becoming increasingly clear that similar demands are being voiced in response to similar concerns, ranging from how emerging nations like India and China can effectively deal with the climate emergency to gaining a more substantial presence in global organizations now and in the future. Suspicion about the US's hegemonic position and motivations has persisted for a long time, lending credence to these views. As if that weren't bad enough, they both believe that the United States should not be the only power in the world and that a multipolar system would be more appropriate.<sup>[2]</sup> Underlying these similarities is the conviction that the twenty-first century will be known as the Asian



Century. This would mean that Asia will play a pivotal role in international affairs and that a stable and peaceful Asian domain serves both countries' main interests.

Many harmful components plague the links between India and China despite considerable positive overlaps in the interactions between the two countries. The fundamental closeness of these two entities, both physically and in terms of their policy aims, often intensifies the conflicts between them. "The long-standing territorial disputes (concerning Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin) that have been compounded by historical and more modern conflicts (in the form of the 1962 War and the recent Galwan incident in 2020 that resulted in casualties on both sides)" are among the negative variables that have contributed to the current situation. More generally, observers have also seen a rivalry characterized by a high level of mistrust between the two parties as they compete for "influence, power, hegemony, and profits"<sup>[3]</sup> This competition is pervasive in New Delhi and Beijing's efforts to find a mutually beneficial "trade and energy security arrangement. This dynamic extends out into the larger area, most notably concerning the Indian Ocean area (IOR). Still, it also pertains to the bilateral connections that each state maintains with other nations in South Asia, South East Asia, East Asia, and the Indo-Pacific. In this context, New Delhi is most concerned about China's tight relationship with Pakistan. At the same time, Beijing is most concerned about India's growing relationships with the United States of America (along with Japan and Australia). The latter is especially relevant since it pertains to the dynamics of the balance of power in Asia, as well as the question of whether the state will be able to claim leadership and hegemony over either South Asia or East Asia, as well as the whole Asian area as a whole, or will be prevented from doing so." These significant reciprocal pressures are only going to get more intense because both governments are accumulating ever more strong military capabilities via the use of similar modernization efforts.

Consequently, the relationship between India and China might be seen as a "double-edged sword, in which some aspects of their connection can be considered as having both positive and negative potential outcomes simultaneously. The breadth and magnitude of these advantages and liabilities are evermore accumulating in nature because both governments are continuing to climb to ever-greater worldwide prominence, and the bandwidth of their global interests is likewise rising exponentially." In international relations, a more realistic way of thinking refers to the fact that their relationship is a "typical example of a security dilemma. This means that any strategic acts carried out by one side are always seen as a danger to the interests of the other side."<sup>[4]</sup> One possible "way for India-China relations to move away from the security dilemma and concentrate on positive-sum outcomes is to adopt a more constructivist-centered perspective." This perspective highlights how shared interests, aims, "fears, and threats" are all "the product of human agency, of social construction." The origins of these partnerships and rivals between states are historical but also ingrained in modern interaction. "In this manner, it is possible to get a valuable understanding of these partnerships and rivalries via shared social experiences and their psychological repercussions."<sup>[5]</sup>

From this vantage point, "threat perception serves as a valuable and essential lens through which we can better assess and comprehend how New Delhi and Beijing interact. Threat perceptions are formed by historical interactions between states, which provide the foundation for predicting how actors may behave in various scenarios. Gojree,"<sup>[6]</sup> defined threat perceptions as the "anticipation of harm to either one's material assets or belief systems." "Threat perceptions are affected by past interactions between states. For example, the legacy of the 1962 War and other memories of animosity and conflict clearly impact India-China relations, contributing to a climate of suspicion and hostility towards present-day relations and exacerbating perceived threats." Thus, it is essential to overcome



such negative aspects to have constructive interactions. This underscores that "even the prospect of large absolute gains for both parties does not elicit their cooperation so long as each fear how the other will use its increased capabilities."<sup>[7]</sup> In this view, for "New Delhi and Beijing to establish cooperative connections, the good side of the double-edged sword has to win over the negative side of the blade." To do this over a more extended period, it will be necessary to sustain a relationship founded on "shared defense and political and economic objectives."

This essay will continue in the following manner to analyze such dynamics using these helpful heuristic devices. It provides an overview of "the historical development of India-China relations over the last seventy-five years, beginning with their establishment as modern nations in the late 1940s and continuing up to the 2010s." This history serves as an analytical benchmark, and the paper then proceeds to investigate the most significant features of modern ties between New Delhi and Beijing throughout the last ten years. In this section, we precisely analyze the interactions between the two states over "a wide range of criteria before arriving at a set of conclusions. These conclusions assess the areas of convergence and divergence in India–China connections and raise the crucial question of whether positive or negative relations are now prevailing."

### **An Overview of the Past and Present Experiences**

The establishment of modern India in 1947 and "modern China in 1949 in the form of the People's Republic of China (PRC) occurred in the aftermath of bad colonial experiences shared by both countries. While India had been firmly subjugated and occupied by the British Raj for several centuries, imperial China had been forced to give repeated territorial and economic concessions to a range of primarily European powers beginning in the middle of the nineteenth Century." Even though the nature of both states was somewhat dissimilar, "they began their modern incarnations as materially weak and vulnerable entities." The immediate aftermath of the Second World War brought about significant political, social, and developmental issues for both India and China.<sup>[8]</sup> As a consequence of this, both countries endured significant difficulties.

Additionally, for both sets of governing "elites, their states had lost a significant degree of prestige as a result of the activities of foreign players. This contributed to the deep-seated anti-imperialist and anti-colonial feelings in both New Delhi and Beijing. A similar experience and a standard view of the danger strengthened the prospect of their being a firm alliance between the two new postcolonial nations. This was shown by the two governments' apparent skepticism and suspicion of the international system and its builders."<sup>[9]</sup>

"Against the backdrop of the emerging bipolar politics of the Cold War, diplomatic links were established between India and communist China in April 1950. India was the first non-socialist nation to forge ties with China. This was the premise for establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries over "the first decades of their modern relations. The Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai each made their respective state visits in 1954." During these trips, unity, camaraderie, and hope permeated the country's connections with both leaders. There was also the awareness that standing together may assist both governments in better resisting the intrigues of the great foreign powers and fostering more stability in the broader Asian area. This was a realization that occurred between the two states. A phrase that reflected such sentiments was "Hindi–Chini bhai bhai," which translates to "Indians and Chinese are brothers." This phrase was "widely used by politicians from both sides and it was further demonstrated by the "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" of the 1954 "Panchsheel Agreement," which was initially explained by the Chinese



Premier Zhou Enlai. Respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty is the first of these principles, and it encapsulates the common threat perceptions of being invaded again. This was bolstered by the second principle, which was non-aggression, which avoided the use of military force in international affairs, and the third principle, which was non-interference in each other's internal affairs, which resolutely emphasized the necessity of preserving autonomy and self-reliance from outside influence.”<sup>[10]</sup> Both governments' international standing was intended to be restored, and an atmosphere was created in which they could pursue mutual growth and modernization objectives. The last two Principles, equality, sha, red benefit, and peaceful coexistence, reaffirmed these mantras and offered an environment where they could do so.

Relationships started to deteriorate by the late 1950s, as their honeymoon period did not last, despite the initial optimism and some successful negotiations over the contested portions of “their shared borders (which were themselves a negative legacy of the colonial period). New Delhi's harboring of the Dalai Lama in India—after he escaped from Lhasa to Dharmasala in 1959—injecting elements of distrust and frustration into their diplomacy; similarly, Chinese support of the Mizo and Naga insurrections in India's northeast injected elements of mistrust and frustration into their diplomatic efforts. This was even though India had conceded suzerainty over Tibet and acknowledged Tibet as an autonomous region of China, which had annexed Tibet in 1950.” On the other hand, “Beijing started to see New Delhi as a possible danger to its leadership of the Third World. This was particularly true when considering India's central position in the Non-Aligned Movement, which Nehru had officially co-founded in 1961. Therefore, even though both sides subscribed to a similar worldview, as shown by the “Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,” such commitment also brought inherent difficulties about how each side might effectively pursue their main strategic goals. By our example of a sword with two edges, what at first looked to be accords eventually turned out to be conflicts, and what were once similarities turned out to be divisions.”<sup>[11]</sup>

The conflict over the boundary between India and China, representing a shared interest in maintaining territorial integrity, was the most egregious example. If either New Delhi or Beijing were to pursue this issue with unwavering determination, it would inevitably lead to a confrontation between the two countries. The fact that both sides held long-held views based on shared perceptions—perceptions that were centuries or even millennia old—about the gravity of their civilizational importance and their respective histories as great powers from approximately “until at least the mid-1750s, when they each controlled a third to a quarter of the world's trade, further complicated the situation. More significantly, there was a mutual overlap in their perceived historical spheres of influence, resulting in various contested regions throughout history. These regions included Tibet and the western part of China, Bhutan, modern-day Bangladesh, the northwest corner of Central Asia, and arguably almost all of Southeast Asia.”<sup>[12]</sup> “Chinese incursions into Ladakh and the Northeast Frontier Agency occurred in the year 1959. These invasions served as antecedents to the India–China War, which broke out in late 1962 and was based on territorial conflicts about Tibet, Aksai Chin, and Arunachal Pradesh. Nehru's hopes of a unified pan-Asian front led by New Delhi and Beijing were diminished due to the 1962 War, which left a seemingly indelible psychological scar and a deep-seated distrust towards China. In addition to resulting in India's abject defeat within thirty days, the border issue remained unresolved. In addition, it compelled India to abandon its prior slogan, which said that it could flourish in regional and global affairs by its moral example.”<sup>[13]</sup> At the same time, it invoked an expanded and long-lasting militarization of India.



Following the setback in 1962, “New Delhi was shown the importance of military security concerns, which would ultimately involve purchasing nuclear weapons in the late 1990s.” As a consequence of this, India's defense expenditure increased significantly following the defeat. Consequently, the fact that China then began the process of establishing “what would eventually become a long-lasting strategic alliance with Pakistan (with whom New Delhi also faced territorial, leadership, and status issues in South Asia) served only to double down on such a trajectory and heightened Indian perceptions of China as a threat.” The partnership between China and Pakistan would include Beijing offering assistance to “the Pakistani military, enhancing Pakistan's defensive capabilities,” and providing diplomatic support over the Kashmir conflict. In addition, China would be of assistance to Pakistan in its pursuit of becoming “a nuclear weapons state by supplying the country with the technical knowledge and missiles that are capable of delivering nuclear weapons. maintaining a sense in New Delhi that Beijing was carrying out a program to confine India inside South Asia” purposefully further ingrained a persistent mistrust of China in India, which would frequently “temper the pursuit of even their most shared strategic aims. This was accomplished by perceiving that Beijing was conducting a campaign to contain India within South Asia.” Armed conflicts that occurred regularly, such as the ones that took place in Nathula and Chaola on the border between Sikkim and Tibet in the late year 1967 and at Somdurong Chu in 1987, only served to reaffirm these worries. Consequently, the legacy of the 1962 War has resulted in the establishment of hostility between India and China, which, would make it difficult for the two countries to establish meaningful cooperation. After a “Statement of Friendship” was issued in May of 1970, it wasn't until July of 1976 that full diplomatic ties were re-established between the two countries. Slow efforts were subsequently made to stabilize ties, including “creating hotlines, face-to-face commander meetings, and advance notice of military exercises. These measures were included in a joint communiqué issued in May 1980 to prevent additional border conflicts. Following a meeting between Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Premier Zhao Ziyang in New York in October 1985, the former then traveled to China in 1988, becoming the first Indian head of state to do so in the last 34 years. Both a Joint Working Group on border and territory problems and a Joint Economic Group on economic and commercial matters were established due to the visit. Both of these groups were established in response to the visit. As a result of the conclusion of the Cold War in the late 1980s and India's implementation of several reforms to gradually liberalize its economy (in a manner that was analogous to how China had opened its economy to global trade beginning in the late 1970s), bilateral relations between New Delhi and Beijing began to improve significantly. Underpinning this fresh positivity was a desire for a more stable regional environment, as well as a desire for mutual modernization and development goals. This desire also highlighted the shared benefits and gains that can be made through cooperation vis-à-vis interactions on the positive side of their double-edged sword-centered relations. On the list of these was the agreement reached in 1993 on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control, which delineated their boundary, which was 4,000 km long. Jiang Zemin's visit to India in 1996, which was the first visit by a Chinese head of state since 1962, bolstered this collaboration and led to further actions to decrease tensions along the border. These efforts included decreasing patrols and removing significant military systems.”<sup>[14]</sup>

This positive turn in “India–China relations continued after a brief downturn in relations following India's nuclear weapons tests in May 1998. During this time, Vice President Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote to Bill Clinton, who was serving as President of the United States at the time, stating that we have an overt nuclear weapon state on our border, a state that committed armed aggression against India in 1962”<sup>[15]</sup> Although “the nuclear tests (which have been joined by a succession of similar tests by Pakistan) eliminated concepts of nuclear ambiguity from New Delhi's strategic stance,” additional



frequent visits between the two states led to the development of ties in all aspects. In a sense, the nuclear tests matured the relationship between the two countries. In 1999, a Security Dialogue was established, which was “facilitated by an Indian administration that was under the banner of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This government did not have any direct political baggage related to the 1962 War, and it was also much more pragmatic in its approach to foreign policy.”<sup>[16]</sup> In May and June of 2000, Indian President K. R. Narayanan paid a visit, which resulted in the resumption of discussions about economic, scientific, and border issues. “These positive relations culminated in the signing of the 2003 Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation, which forged a consensus on a range of bilateral, regional, and global issues and assisted both sides' core interests regarding modernization, development, and great power.” Even though there were occasional tensions, the most notable was “when Vajpayee described China as a strategic competitor in November 2002.” The two sides came to a “consensus that bilateral relations transcend bilateral issues and have acquired a global and strategic perspective” prior to 2005's “Strategic and Cooperative Partnership Agreement” signing. This agreement went a step further in recognizing the growing complexity and, by extension, the increased potential for conflicts, in the already expansive India-China ties. Trade between the two countries jumped from \$2.9 billion in 2000 to \$73.9 billion in 2011, indicating a deeper economic connection and laying the groundwork for this flowering of relations. Further evidence of their combined efforts to provide sufficient energy security is the fact that the two nations have submitted joint bids for many oil contracts.<sup>[17]</sup> Furthermore, both Beijing and New Delhi knew that in order to be recognized as great powers, they needed to be recognized as economic powers both at home and abroad. As a result, the two nations initiated a string of counterterrorism and military exchanges, focusing on the same problems they faced in Xinjiang and Kashmir. The first time Chinese troops have attacked Indian land since 1962 was in 2008. The 2008 diplomatic declaration “Shared Vision for the Twenty-First Century” laid forth a collective plan for the world's economy. As part of this plan, we regularly participated in international conferences addressing climate change in our area and coordinating nuclear power for peaceful purposes.

Additionally, “the two countries contributed to establishing the BRIC (Brazil–Russia–India–China, later BRICS with the inclusion of South Africa) grouping in 2009. This grouping emphasized shared interests for a more equitable and multipolar world order.” Notably, the shared ambition for a multipolar world was seen to be of utmost importance to ensure the protection of their sovereignty and achieve a balance of power against the United States “economically and concerning Washington's overt regional influence in Asia.” According to statements made by “Chinese Premier Li Keqiang in 2012, India-China relations were the most important bilateral relationship in the 21st century.” In general, relations looked to be in a golden moment because of these statements.

### **A Look at the Different Facets of Contemporary Relations:**

Over the last ten years, India and China have both given the impression of either ultimately emerging or being on the verge of becoming great powers. “Achieving and restoring such a status has been a long-sought-after goal for both New Delhi and Beijing since the 1940s. This is because achieving such a status is a significant dynamic within the foreign policy objectives of both governments. Their relevance to the international system has been. It continues to grow due to its ever-increasing shares of global economic power and rising military expenditure.” Additionally, they are bolstered by the fact that they have the most significant populations in the world and are two of the largest governments regarding how much territory they own. About the first of these metrics, “the gross domestic product (GDP) in constant dollars by purchasing power parity (PPP) in 2020 was \$24.27 trillion for China and \$8.97 trillion for India. These figures represent the first and third highest global



GDPs, accounting for 18.3% and 6.8% of the total global GDP. In 2020, China spent \$252.3 billion on its military, while India spent \$72.9 billion,” making them the second and third most excellent sums, respectively, in the world. Therefore, “India and China are becoming more significant to other considerable powers in the international system, notably the United Powers of America, whose preeminent status is jeopardized due to China's fast rise.” In recent years, the United States of America has “redoubled its efforts to try to contain the dominance of China, particularly by seeking to utilize India (together with more established allies in the form of Japan and Australia) to balance Beijing actively.” To rephrase, these factors are all contributing to India and China's core domestic goals of modernization and development, which necessitate increased market access and resource accumulation. As a result, India-China relations are likely to be fraught with competition and friction in many domains, including economics, military, regional politics, and systemic issues.

### **The Economy**

According to Ogden<sup>[18]</sup> a robust and “globally driven economy confers potential wider elements of authority, interdependence, and control within the international system, but also gives the economically powerful states a system-determining centrality.” This is the essence of what it means to have “a strong and globally driven economy.” A natural synergy between China and India has been the subject of much anticipation over the past ten years. China has been referred to as the “workshop of the world,” and India has been referred to as the “back office of the world.” “Former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji” has suggested that such a synergy would be irresistible globally. As a result, economic connections between India and China “have been seen to be one of the primary foundations of the China–India reconciliation in the 1990s.” These relations have remained consistent despite other areas of disagreement between the two countries. Despite the extended standoff between “their two militaries in eastern Ladakh, which culminated in the Galwan battle in 2020, intra-India–China commerce reached a record \$125 billion in 2021, which was a 43.3% rise from 2020.”<sup>[19]</sup> This achievement is symbolic of the significance of the situation. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that such significant increases have not been typical of economic relationships since 2011 when their development has sometimes been of a type that is less than exponential. “Since 2009, China has become India's top importer, which clearly indicates the magnitude of the dependency between the two countries. During 2020, China was India's most important trade partner, accounting for 13.8% of total imports. This was higher than the United States (7.6%), the United Arab Emirates (6.4%), Saudi Arabia (5.7%), and Iraq (5.0%) (Statista, 2021). In addition, India depended on Chinese equipment and supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, with Beijing's technical competence being superior to New Delhi's.”<sup>[20]</sup>

Importantly, such a significance is “not reciprocated in Indian exports to China, which, in conjunction with a massive trade deficit between the two” countries that was estimated to reach \$69 billion in 2021, has resulted in a system of economic ties that are substantially unequal. This mismatch undermines more extensive normative assertions about reciprocal “growth and the stated 'win-win' foundation of such connections, which today favors Beijing more than New Delhi.” Moreover, it devalues the relationship between the two countries. Additionally, it highlights a developing power respectful “in their respects, which may be boosting China's regional position—and possible hegemony—more than it is helping India's position in the area. These worries have flowed into suspicions against Chinese investments in India, which have been regularly rejected by elites in New Delhi, particularly in the infrastructure and telecom sectors, originally owing to security concerns and espionage. These issues have evolved into suspicions regarding Chinese investments in India. TikTok, WeChat, and hundreds of other Chinese-made applications were prohibited in India in 2020.”



These applications were categorized as being "prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, defense of India, security of the state, and public order," according to the Indian Ministry of Information Technology, cited in the BBC in 2020. It was also announced in May 2021 that Chinese businesses will not participate in "India's national trials for 5G telecommunications infrastructure. While New Delhi continues to be very protective of the integrity of its domestic markets and of sharing its raw resources," it is now apparent that the goals of mutual economic growth seem to be a secondary priority in India's ties with China. This is possible because national security considerations are now more critical.

The unwillingness of India to participate in "the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which China is leading, is another example of such a position. New Delhi has hesitated to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), a component of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This is because New Delhi is concerned that the project will pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This could reduce India's broader claims to the region while enhancing Pakistan. Additionally, the construction of roads close to the Indian border could be used to assist militants in infiltrating Indian territory. These sovereignty claims also incorporate broader concerns that China's presence might strategically obstruct India's links with Eurasia" and operate as a counterweight to India's East Policy, reducing India's regional strategic footprint. Last but not least, India considers constructing such infrastructure, which includes enhancing China's presence at the port of Gwadar in Pakistan, to be a component of a "string of pearls" plan intended to limit India inside South Asia methodically. This latter impression of the danger also plays a role in the more significant regional rivalry for "trade and energy security issues in the wider IOR, described in the following section."

Additionally, increased "trade levels between India and China imply a degree of dependency that augments their mutual growth and modernization goals." This is even though their economic progress brings about deeper conflicts that outweigh the positives that are now being experienced. In a more fundamental sense, as the two nations liberalize their economies and are on their way to becoming fully mature entities in international affairs, they are also confronting comparable fundamental difficulties, although at different stages. As a result of these factors, "India and China were rated 80th out of 180 states jointly in the 'Corruption Perceptions Index 2019' published by Transparency International. This index measures the degree to which companies and professionals perceive the public sector as corrupt."<sup>[21]</sup> On the other hand, both states are experiencing extensive environmental contamination due to economic liberalization policies that are generally unrestricted and underregulated.

Consequently, China was responsible for 26.5% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2018, "while India was responsible for 6.6% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. These figures represent the top and third most significant CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per state globally, respectively. states air pollution was responsible for 1.6 million fatalities in India and China in 2017. In 2020, 46 of the world's 100 most polluted cities were in India, while 42 were in China. Nine of the top ten most polluted cities were located in India."<sup>[22]</sup> As a result, the resolution of such difficulties is a concern shared by both governments, and they can gain knowledge from one another and work together in international frameworks. These relationships help to mitigate the more unfavorable aspects of their economic links, which are a double-edged sword.





## **Military**

“Both sides’ economic fortunes have skyrocketed over the last several decades, as has the pace of military expenditure. This spending has often been utilized to enhance their respective trade, energy, and territory security needs. Both sides’ economic fortunes have flourished over the past few decades. Furthermore, from the Indian point of view, China’s gradual modernization of its military and its growing assertiveness in the area is seen as a direct result of China’s economic liberalization and the enormous relative advantages that Beijing has obtained in comparison to other nations.”<sup>[23]</sup> Due to these relative benefits, “China has been able to achieve exponentially more growth than its partners, including India.” This is because China has traditionally seen higher rates of economic expansion.

Furthermore, because they are geographically close to one another, the pursuit of such interests by both New Delhi and Beijing has resulted in an almost unavoidable overlap of their strategic objectives, creating the potential for friction and conflict between the two countries. When seen from the Indian point of view, “the legacy of the disastrous 1962 War continues to permeate its threat perceptions towards China.” This impression is further strengthened by “Beijing’s prolonged alliance ties with Islamabad,” which has resulted in Pakistan being a proxy for more significant Indo-Chinese military conflicts.

Based on this, the military relationships between the two Asian giants have fluctuated between efforts to generate tighter relations, resulting in more stable relations, and attempts to heighten tensions, raising the likelihood of confrontation and even triggering it. “In consolidating their economic strength, ensuring their internal development, and stabilizing their political systems, New Delhi and Beijing recognize that having a peaceful regional and global system is essential.”<sup>[24]</sup> This is a more positive aspect of their interactions, described as having a double-edged sword. Consequently, a condition of antagonism cultivated over time is not essentially in either state’s best strategic interests and should be avoided. Additionally, “the Chinese dogma of a peaceful rise in its ongoing pursuit of great power status” would be discredited if a military confrontation were invoked. This would be the case if particular Indian claims concerning “moral exceptionalism in diplomacy and statecraft” were to be undermined. Considering the significance of “the Chinese economy to the economy” of the whole world and India’s rising influence in this area, it is arguable that a full-scale confrontation would cause the entire region to become unsettled.

Furthermore, it would have far-reaching and detrimental implications for China and India regarding their “political, military, and economic” systems. As a result of these factors, India and China have engaged in alternating stages of military cooperation, as was mentioned before, particularly in the fight against counterterrorism threats shared by both countries.

Further similarity may be seen in concerns over the maintenance of security in their shared neighborhood, particularly concerning transnational “crimes such as the trafficking of drugs and the infiltration of militant organizations across their borders. There have also been collaborative exercises on anti-piracy training to mitigate against common trade and energy security risks in the IOR.” This has been done to boost the IOR’s continuing economic growth. Since its inception “in 2007, their joint military exercise known as “Exercise Hand-in-Hand” has undergone eight incarnations, with both sides hosting the event.” The most recent participation in this exercise is scheduled for 2019.

“The territorial sphere is where their mutually exclusive interests have created hostility, even though these sets of interests intersect in a manner mutually advantageous to both parties. Over the last several



years, this tension about India and China's opposing claims to the disputed regions of Arunachal Pradesh and Aksai Chin has grown evident." Restoring the territorial integrity of each side is essential to resolving these issues, which are plagued by inconsistently drawn boundaries and frequent intrusions by the Chinese. According to "New Delhi's perspective, if Beijing were to gain control of Arunachal Pradesh, it would extend China's power over the Himalayas and into India's unstable north-eastern states. This would threaten India's regional hegemony and stability."<sup>[25]</sup> As a result, the dispute poses a more significant "security threat to India than it does to China. The Doklam military standoff in 2017 and the violent battles in Galwan in 2020—both of which further highlighted an existential aspect in the reciprocal threat views of both sides—have lately served as examples of these threat perceptions and the inherent zero-sum character of the disagreement." Both of these events have occurred in recent times. Increasingly strident nationalist attitudes "on both sides are also contributing to the escalation of tensions, as are domestic expectations" for robust reactions that are supported by the military if any invaders are considered to have invaded the territory.

Given that India's perception of China mostly continues to be one of "deep distrust" it is not improbable that more military conflicts, which might result in fatalities, would occur shortly. Arunachal Pradesh will continue to be "a pressure point for China to bear down whenever it feels the need to 'punish' India, considering the existing military disparities between India and China." For India, this will mean that they will continue to try, which will ultimately be fruitless, to equal the military might of China in a region where the topography and logistics make this impossible.

Among Indian elites, "China's apparent string of pearls strategy to provide potential bases for its military in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has been viewed as a means to limit New Delhi's influence in the South Asian sphere while simultaneously undermining its authority over its smaller neighbors. This strategy aims to provide potential bases for China's military in the IOR. These worries are connected to other aspects of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), as was mentioned before. Furthermore, they are made worse because India's bordering governments in South Asia are playing "the China card" by taking advantage of Beijing's generosity to counterbalance India's hegemonic domination of the region." The territorial conflicts between the two sides are effectively intertwined with the interconnectedness of these elements involving regional control and regional status. As a result, "tensions in one area may often exacerbate tensions in another. On a bigger scale, the claims that China is now concentrating on gaining military and economic hegemony inside Asia are still valid. This is because Chinese authorities know that many decades more are required for China to acquire a superpower status comparable to that of the United States."

Additionally, they "have the critical counter-effect of restricting New Delhi's regional hegemony aspirations, damaging India's pursuit of great power status." This is an essential part of their policy.

Additionally, the ongoing "accumulation of ever-increasing military strength by both sides—including India's testing of a 'China-centric' Agni V in late 2021 and China's development of hypersonic missile capabilities as well as their mutual development of guided missile destroyers and submarines serves to exacerbate further tensions as well as perceptions of the threat on both sides."

Additionally, "India is supplying missiles to the Philippines and Vietnam, which is having an impact on China's regional security."



Meanwhile, Beijing's innovations are catalyzing comparable advancements in the United States. Consequently, there is a race between the two sides to increase their military expenditure, which is spiraling and expanding. This happens "as both powers continue their competitive rise in the international system as rival techno-powers, watching and responding to each other"<sup>[26]</sup>

### **The Systemic.**

With their territorial disputes still unresolved and their continued suspicion of one other's intentions, China and India are engaging in a kind of rivalry that undermines the full potential of their alliance—the establishment and preservation of regional hegemony. It is clear that China and India have a more negative outlook on the threat as these issues are now impacting their bilateral relations with the smaller states in the Indo-Pacific region. In the event that the issues cause more intrusions into the "zone of influence" of each party, this will be very evident. This animosity has been heating up for a while, and one reason for it is China's deep strategic "all-weather relationship" with Pakistan. This relationship aims to keep India and Pakistan on equal footing and has an impact on the Kashmir dispute. Consequently, China's influential position in Indo-Pakistani relations shows that Beijing is trying to derail India's hegemonic ambitions in Asia and trap New Delhi in a protracted regional conflict with its neighbor. In spite of more serious regional conflicts, the Chinese Air Force often takes part in Pakistan's national day celebrations.<sup>[27]</sup> The strong ties between the two nations are symbolized by this.

The strengthening of India's relationships with the United States of America and Washington's most important allies, such as Japan and Australia, is also detrimental to "the relationship between India and China." Notably, in 2014, President Barack Obama of the United States of America and Prime Minister Narendra Modi met and made a statement saying that "we will have a transformative relationship as trusted partners in the 21st century... our partnership will be a model for the rest of the world"<sup>[28]</sup> It was observed by Indian authorities in 2016 that there are reciprocal linkages that are "rooted in shared values of freedom, democracy, universal human rights, tolerance, and pluralism, equal opportunities for all citizens, and the rule of law." Significantly, such comments were considered a challenge "to China's regional and global interests, and they were also seen as a method for India to contribute to more considerable international efforts to restrict Beijing's influence over the East Asian area successfully. In 2021, India dispatched a task force consisting of four warships into the South China Sea for a deployment that lasted for two months and included drills with the United States of America, Japan, and Australia." This was done to enhance the idea that India was a member of the larger "Quad."

Additionally, the 'Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement' signed in 2016 considerably improved the military links between the United States and India. This kind of "strategic positioning has been accelerating under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, whose decision to abandon India's traditional non-alignment stance highlights India's strategic flexibility and growing threat perceptions concerning China. It also highlights New Delhi's continued weakness compared to Beijing."

"Positively, and often within the more extensive international system outside of the Indo-Pacific area, there is evidence of a rising strategic convergence between India and China." This suggests that India and China are becoming more similar in their strategic approaches. This convergence has enormous systemic implications, and it is important to emphasize once again that a double-edged sword characterizes their interactions and that both parties can simultaneously maximize mutual advantages in some areas, even as tensions are increasing "in other areas of their bilateral ties." Constructed based



on a multipolar perspective that is shared by two emerging but under-represented nations, India and China, respectively:

*“a democratic international order that represents the interests of a variety of states, rather than that of the hegemon, is integrally linked to a more equitable share of the world’s resources, recognition of global interdependence for sustainable development, and the mobilization of considerable scientific and technological resources for addressing poverty.”<sup>[29]</sup>*

Adopting this perspective lays the groundwork for collaborative efforts to address problems and concerns that are of common interest, such as managing “the climate emergency and the operation of global finance.”

There is a belief that New Delhi and Beijing should “enhance their influence in international institutions... (and) to establish a discourse representing the interests of developing countries to strengthen the legitimacy of their demands.”<sup>[30]</sup> This belief is mixed in with the perspective “that there is a need for New Delhi and Beijing” to do these things. Specifically, “a desire to create a new international order and a powerful sense of personal and collective suffering under colonial domination” is a significant factor that is a vital foundation for such aspirations. When Modi visited China in 2015, both countries observed that their “simultaneous re-emergence... as two major powers in the region and the world, offers a momentous opportunity for (the) realization of the Asian Century.” This was one of the ways both countries made this observation. “In 2017, India became a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO),” which Modi saw as “a logical extension of India’s age-old ties with the region... India’s engagement... will help us build a region that is an engine of economic growth for the world; (and) is more stable” These sentiments are exemplified by India’s membership in “the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” which symbolizes these sentiments. The most recent joint military exercises between India and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) occurred in late 2021. These workouts occurred "around the same time as the Quad's 'Malabar 21' exercises," which is an important detail to remember. Despite their intense animosity against one another, these seemingly contradictory exchanges show how both New Delhi and Beijing are becoming better at focusing on narrow areas in order to achieve their own strategic objectives. This comment clarifies their complicated and conflicting relationship even more.

### **Conclusion: Convergence and divergence should be navigated simultaneously**

A complicated and ever-changing mix of interests that have intersected and divided during their almost 75 years of foreign activities has afflicted relations between China and India. This has been apparent in every interaction between them. It seems like this dynamic will dictate the dominant nature of relations between New Delhi and Beijing. It's something that has been greatly accelerated in the early twenty-first century due to the exponential growth in the relative shares of economic, military, and diplomatic power between the two states. The essay has shown that these dynamics show how their interactions, driven by strategic aims, are complicated and conflicted. In their pursuit of re-establishing their reputation as outstanding powers, both nations recognize the need of bolstering their worldwide influence via a combination of their respective distinctive power quotients.

There are several areas where India and China seem to be forced into competition, including the amicable settlement of territorial disputes, the establishment of undeniable regional dominance, and the leadership role in the Asian Century. This is because these long-term objectives and concerns merge. Previous violent events and precedents, such as the violent riots at Galwan in 2020, reinforce



views of risk. Both sides' enormous and continuous accumulation of material power only heightens these notions.

There is no easy way to find a way out of this converging and diverging situation. The remark that "bilateral relations transcend bilateral issues" in the 2005 "Strategic and Cooperative Partnership Agreement" (quoted above) suggests that both India and China have recognized this as a core component of their relationship. Conversely, following the Galwan incident, when India-China relations reportedly hit their lowest point since 1962, the prevailing narrative in Indian official discourse is that "there cannot be business as usual" until China withdraws its forces and sets the disputed border back to its original state. Also, "the state of the border will determine the state of the relationship," as stated by S. Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs, in a remark made at the start of 2022, brings this up. With this shift in emphasis, interests, and preferences are stratified between the two camps. This order may change depending on the situation and the preferences of specific audiences. Disputes around the border are now the most pressing issue. Alterations to other facets of India and China's relationship, particularly concerning material capacities, have intensified this shift. The Chinese capital has just surpassed New Delhi in terms of capability. Specifically, with the advent of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), rivalry for regional sway has intensified. This has caused the two sides to lose steam in their efforts to work together on critical global problems, including climate change, the structure of the global trade system, sovereignty disputes, and humanitarian interventions, among many others. This observation further reinforces the idea of decreased cooperation between the two giants, which heightens additional tensions between them and turns their links into a double-edged sword.

Maintaining a balanced approach to the inherent double-edged sword in the relationship between New Delhi and Beijing is the most critical challenge that must be addressed to have harmonious connections. Because of this, the other side can only be good. Considering the current state of their relations and the recent border skirmishes, it would be beneficial for India and China to step up their bilateral diplomatic efforts to resolve the border dispute. This would determine the future trajectory of their relationships. Revitalizing Modi becoming "India's Nixon," a role enthusiastically embraced in 2014, could hold potential in resolving the border dispute and forging strategic partnerships with China as allies in the Asian twenty-first Century.

Conversely, it would need concessions from both camps, which are now challenging to devise because of the strained relations between the two groups, sometimes inflamed by patriotism. Several regional elements might be a buffer against forming such a strategic route. These include the persistent all-weather links between Islamabad and Beijing and New Delhi's apparent and growing strategic lean towards Washington (and Tokyo). The failure to reconcile tensions between Beijing and Islamabad is why.

In a larger sense, leaders across all political spectrums need to develop self-awareness. Improving cultural interactions between the two countries is also necessary to reduce the deep-seated distrust between the people of both countries. Here, it's crucial to refrain from seeing things through the lens of a zero-sum game. Further, instead of letting further border clashes disrupt their primary agreed aims irreparably, the two governments should benefit from concentrating on achieving these goals to strengthen the dialog. Creating a multipolar international system is a blatant example of their shared interests, as it would help them achieve their goal of becoming great powers.<sup>[31]</sup> The standard aims of domestic development and modernization best illustrate these common interests. Once again, if the



border conflict could be addressed via a fair and mutually beneficial "grand bargain," it would eliminate this conditioning reality and provide the groundwork for the flourishing of their other interactions. It would also restructure things and, fingers crossed, bring the states' strategic priorities and interests together. To rephrase, a comprehensive view of the India–China relationship is required if it is to be positive-sum in character, and this, in turn, calls for a kind of full-spectrum maintenance that is always vigilant.

Given the current climate—one marked by two strong and confident leaders, Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi—and the growing impact of populist and nationalist ideologies on global politics, the endeavors above assume a higher level of importance and urgency. Greater cooperation between India and China in all areas, especially the military and economy, may also foster a stronger sense of mutual dependence, understanding, and fate between the two countries. This will be useful in the event of tension and potential conflict between the two nations. The most important thing to remember in modern Indian foreign policy is pragmatism, and it would be wise to embrace complexity in strategy rather than try to simplify it. Even though it faces the adverse effects of unfair and unbalanced trade with Beijing, New Delhi may profit from establishing cooperative efforts on climate change and social governance/corruption. India and China might potentially join forces militarily to fight transnational crimes like drug trade or the infiltration of terrorist groups. Even if China remains Pakistan's most staunch supporter—a country that is generally seen as the principal incubator of terrorism in India—this is still feasible in some domains. In a world where the COVID-19 pandemic is far from over, where new, unidentified variants threaten the health of both states and where the US stock market is on the verge of a seismic collapse, the only way to bring stability is to recognize the complexity of the situation while also appreciating the trust that can be fostered through greater cooperation and positive collaboration. By the end of it, it will help China and India achieve their long-term goals of becoming great powers and working together to live out the Asian Century.

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