

Contemporary Contentious Issues between India and China

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Abstract

The India-China relationship is of great complexity, while there have been generally improving relations in recent years, yet many issues come up over and over again, thus hindering the normal growth in relations. India and China are the Asian giants in every sense of the term; from physical to demographic and to economic aspects and have witnessed many tensions in the recent past. The paper under study attempts to look into various contemporary issues of divergence between India and China. Simultaneously, this paper gives an idea about the evolving friendly relations between India and China, which otherwise have been spoiled by the diverging issues.

Keywords : India, China, NSG, Doklam Crisis, Terrorism.

Introduction

During the recent years, India and China relations have seen an upward trend in many areas like trade, investments, people to people contacts, but at the same time some issues pop up time and again that act as a stumbling block to the normal course of relations and thus add to the trust deficit among these two countries. Off late, one can see many issues on which there is hardly any convergence between India and China, and thus holding the relationship back. The contemporary issues like NSG membership issue, Masood Azhar issue, Doklam crisis etc. have given a serious jolt to the bilateral relations between India and China

1. Masood Azhar Issue:

The issue of Masood Azhar was among the contentious contemporary issues between India and China. India is trying to campaign internationally against terrorism. India wanted Masood Azhar to be blacklisted by counter terror committee of the UN Security Council. This move was time and again blocked by China. It was after the Pathankot airbase attack on January 2, that India began its campaign to blacklist Masood Azhar as global terrorist. India claimed that this terrorist belonged to the group known as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM). On the event of China's block, India's spokesperson of MEA, Vikas Swarup said, "We note with concern China's decision to block the proposal to list Masood Azhar as a designated terrorist under the 1267 sanctions Committee of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) which has been presented nine months ago and had received strong backing of all other members of the committee." He further added that, "The international community is aware that the Pakistan-based JeM which is proscribed by the United Nations has been responsible for innumerable terrorist attacks on India including the Pathankot airbase attack. The inability of the international community to list its leader Masood Azhar is an unfortunate blow to the concerted efforts to effectively counter all forms of terrorism".ⁱ This blockade also cast a shadow on India's plan to bring an international convention against terrorism under the ambit of United Nations.

In 2018, China once again blocked the attempt to designate Masood Azhar as a global terrorist. The major powers like US, UK and France pressured Beijing as they took the issue to the UNSC. China was made to express its reservations publicly as to why it is withholding the listing of Azhar as a terrorist, when in fact the Jaish-e-Mohammad group, that he is associated with has already been declared as a terror organization by UN. Subsequently, India has been making consistent efforts to garner support, so that this technical hold by China can be lifted and Azhar be designated as the global terrorist. If at all India succeeds in doing so, it could be a diplomatic victory for India.

2. NSG Issue:

The 'nuclear proliferation weapon treaty' (NPT), which was agreed in 1968, gave permission to non-nuclear weapon nations to have nuclear equipment and technology only for peaceful means.

The nuclear suppliers group was formed in 1975 and constitutes of 48 states who have agreed to coordinate their export controls to the states which are nuclear weapon free. It governs the sharing of civilian nuclear material and the related equipment and technology. Some of its participating members include: Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, UK and US.ⁱⁱ

The NSG comprising the high ranking nations have complete control and access to technology and moreover they act against proliferation. Thus, it is necessary for India to attain its membership so that it can get access to the advanced technology.

In recent years, India has been successful in getting membership of three out of four multilateral export restricted regimes, and now it wants to be a member of NSG. By securing the membership of three export restricted regimes, India has become the member of the "Missile Technology Control Regime" in June 2016, the "Wassenaar Arrangement" in December 2017 & the "Australia Group" in January 2018. These entries have made India's claim fair enough for the NSG membership.ⁱⁱⁱ New Delhi also tried to reset

the relation with China and had subsequently approached China in order to bring it on terms to remove their objections over NSG membership of India. But the Chinese leadership is not showing any such interest and are rigid on their stand. China has blocked India's attempt to enter into NSG club. "Beijing's recalcitrance on the question of NSG membership for India is a clear signal that India is and remains a major nuclear challenger to China – at least where global recognition of the two countries' non-proliferation credentials is concerned."^{iv}

China tried to club India and Pakistan together as both are non-signatories of NPT and tried to convince the NSG nations to adopt a "criteria-based approach."^v By this approach, China wants either both India and Pakistan to get this membership or no one among them. Still many NSG nations like the US, France and UK made a distinction between them on the basis of non-proliferation track record. Thus, this issue is effecting India and China relations negatively.

3. Doklam Standoff:

Owing to the 1962 India-China border war, the Doklam plateau which is "the tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan became a bone of contention."^{vi} It started exactly on June 16, 2017 and witnessed the worst ever military stand-off between India and China at Doklam throughout these decades. The issue began when Indian troops passed over the Sikkim border to halt construction of the road by Chinese at disputed Doklam plateau in the Eastern Himalayas (Figure).



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/it-took-13-rounds-of-talks-to-settle-doklam-report/articleshow/67136832.cms>

India has accused the People's Liberation Army of constructing a road that would alter the status quo on ground level. China, in turn, considers it her right to construct a road on the land which it says belongs to her. But India is of the view that this land is Bhutan's (A tiny Himalayan Kingdom) possession. India claimed that this road will provide China's entry to the "Chicken's Neck" (a narrow stretch of Land) which connects India to the states of Northeast.^{vii} It would also change the tri-junction point agreed on the Sikkim-Tibet boundary. On June 29, Government of Bhutan gave a statement, in which they also accused PLA of violating its agreements. They also demanded that the "status quo in Doklam area is maintained as before 16 June 2017". Japan, one of the powerful Asian countries, backed India over the standoff that continued for two months long at the India-China-Bhutan tri-junction. Japanese Ambassador in India, Mr. Kenji Hiramatsu said, "All parties concerned with the Doklam standoff not to resort to unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force, and resolve dispute in a peaceful manner." Reacting to the comments of Japanese Ambassador in New Delhi, spokesperson of Foreign Ministry in Beijing, Hua Chunying said, "I have seen the Japanese ambassador in India really wants to support India. I want to remind him not to randomly make comments before clarifying the facts."^{viii} Thus, Mr.Hiramatsu's words reflect the direct criticism of China's position and unqualified support for India on the Doklam issue.

A video of August 15, 2017 has shown the armies of India and China exchanging punches and kicks near the Pangong Lake in Ladakh. It also shows that the stone-pelting took place. Lt-General Prakash Khatoch (retired), made the video public, which showed that it were Chinese who actually started pushing the Indian army personnel and pelting stones over them. He said, "They started it all, our chaps only responded."^{ix} The video captured an ugly brawl of the border situation when standoff was continuing for third consecutive month on both sides of Doklam. It starts showing soldiers from both the sides hitting each other and then eventually kicking and pelting stones over one another. The video further shows one soldier pushing down the other one and one more who is lying on ground is being targeted with stones by the

opposite party. Indian Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson, Raveesh Kumar gave his confirmation about this incident, although he did not mention any incident of stone-pelting and fighting. He said, "We feel that such incidents are not in the interest of either side. We should maintain peace and tranquility." ^x

On 21, August, 2017, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, speaking on the previous day video said, "Chinese border troops were conducting normal patrols on the Chinese side of Pangong Lake. During this time they were obstructed by Indian border forces and the Indian side took fierce actions, colliding with the Chinese personnel". She also added, "China is extremely dissatisfied with this." ^{xi} On the same day, Home Minister of India, Rajnath Singh, while addressing Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) said, "A deadlock is going on between India and China in Doklam. But I think solution will come out soon. China will also take positive step from its side." He also added, "We want to maintain good relations with our neighbors. We don't want conflict, we want peace." ^{xii} ITBP guards the border in Ladakh, Arunachal etc.

Finally, Doklam Stand Off ended on 28th of August, 2017, after 73-days. Both the countries called-off their soldiers from this area. ^{xiii} According to a report by the parliamentary panel, it took 13 rounds of diplomatic discussions between India and China to put an end to this face-off between the militaries. ^{xiv} All this has again left a negative impact on relations and added to the mutual distrust.

Conclusion

Being neighboring countries, India and China have a long history of interaction which quite often has been marked by friction over various issues. This, however, has been shadowed with the desire to cooperate and resolve these divergent issues. India and China, however, can establish a cooperation among themselves by giving importance to the convergent ideas and issues among them and try to minimize their issues of divergence so that a good relations flourish and eventually that will benefits both the countries.

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