

CHINA-INDIA RELATIONSHIP: BONHOMIE TO HOSTILITY AND THEN TO RAPPROCHEMENT

Dr. M. Mohibul Haque*

Mehraj Uddin Gojree**

ABSTRACT

China and India, the two great ancient civilizations, coexisted in peace and harmony for millennia. But as postcolonial modern nation-states, with the exception of a very short period of bonhomie in the early 1950s, relations between the two Asian giants have been marked by conflict, containment, mutual suspicion, distrust, and rivalry. The focus of this paper is to elucidate the bilateral relations between China and India in the historical perspective wherein the main emphasis is laid on the period between 1950 up to the end of Cold War in the early and mid-nineties. The main objective has been to highlight the factors which led to the bitterness of relations between the two states despite their sharing of identical views and objectives in the early fifties. Besides the paper also analyses the factors which compelled the two hostile states to soften their attitude and normalize their deterring relationship in the mid-seventies. A historical-comparative-analytical approach has been adopted to study the facts with optimum level of objectivity.

Keywords: China, India, relations, conflict, rapprochement.

* Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University

** Research Scholar, Department of Political Science, Aligarh Muslim University, U.P., INDIA

Background: The Historical Relationship

China and India, the giants of Asia are two of the oldest and living civilizations of the world. They have cultural, religious, and economic links dating back to 2500 years. Their interaction was a two way traffic and the two elements of this exchange were material and spiritual, which were mainly facilitated by the Central Asian route which is also known as the 'Silk Route'¹. In the sphere of material exchange, India supplied the trade items such as corals, pearls, glass and fragrances while silk was the major item transported from China to India. Besides material exchanges, it was perhaps the spiritual linkage (Buddhism) that altogether transformed the relationship between the two ancient civilizations. During this period, many Chinese pilgrims visited India and also some Indian pilgrims visited China. The most noteworthy among the Chinese pilgrims were Fa-hien (399-414 A.D.), Yuan Chwang (630-643 A.D.) and I- Tsing (671-695 A.D.) Among the Indian scholars who went to China were Kumarajiva (401 A.D.) Guna Verma (431 A.D.) and Dharmagupta (590 A.D.) (Chakravarti, 1961:2). These spiritual visits from India to China and from China to India enhanced and strengthened mutual understanding, which acted as a means in modern history of China and India for extending mutual help and understanding to each other's peoples during their respective liberation struggles.

Though these material and spiritual interaction between the two civilizations continued during the first few centuries of the Christian era, the process ceased after about tenth century A.D. Since then, both the states lived as if they were oblivious of each other's existence for over a thousand years, until about the advent of nineteenth century when both came under the control of European powers. After that, India was totally colonized by the British and China was gradually transformed into a semi-colonial society. Though the colonialism did not entirely turned off the century's old relationship between China and India but made its velocity sluggish. However, because of their extensive association and having suffered the same fate, they extended moral support and sympathy to each other in their respective anti-imperialist struggle. They became natural allies and devised various ways to drive the imperialist out of the region.

Jawaharlal Nehru based his vision of 'Resurgent Asia' on friendship between the two largest states of Asia. He was aware of the fact that after the liberation of both the states from the Western clutches, the tremendous potential of economic cooperation would necessarily bring India and China closer to each other and politically too, the two would play an key role in world

affairs. However, after the end of the War, China plunged into Civil War between ruling Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communists. The well armed KMT army was backed by the Americans, but in spite of that the Communists eventually, on October 1, 1949 defeated the KMT regime and came to power in China. In pre-Communist China, India had established very cordial relations with KMT government especially after 1939 when Jawaharlal Nehru visited China. However, after the Communist establishment in China, Nehru was convinced that public opinion in India was against KMT and lending support to it, would not be favored in India. Thus respecting the victory of Communist Party of China (CPC) over KMT, on April 1, 1950 India recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) as the legitimate government representing the Chinese people. On this occasion Nehru remarked

“When it was clear that the new Chinese government was in possession of entire mainland of China, when it was quite clear that there was no force which was likely to supplant it or push it away, we offered recognition to this new government and suggested that we might exchange diplomatic missions” (Chengapa, 2004: 8).

India was the second non-Communist country after Burma to recognize the newly formed People's Republic of China. In this paper an attempt has been made to highlight the factors which led to the animosity between the two Asian powers despite their sharing of identical views and objectives in the early fifties. Besides the paper also analyses the factors which compelled the two hostile states to soften their attitude and normalize their deterring relationship in the mid-seventies. A historical-comparative-analytical approach has been adopted to study the facts with optimum level of objectivity.

Post-Independent Era

After their independence, India in 1947 and China in 1949, both initiated the process of nation-building. They adopted different models of development and their political system was not similar. India adopted the path of parliamentary democracy, mixed model of economy and non-alignment, while China followed one-party rule under Communism, state controlled economy and joined the Communist Camp of Soviet Union (Mishra, 2004: 11). However, the divergence in their political systems did not hold back the growing friendly relations between the two states. In 1948, India established diplomatic relations with China and after Burma; India became the second non-Communist state to recognize the People's Republic of China (PRC). The first Prime Minister of independent India, Jawaharlal Nehru, viewed Indian independence and the

Chinese revolution as parallel expressions of new and resurgent Asian nationalism and thereby visualized that in new Asia, China and India were destined to play a vital and competitive leadership roles. He therefore, wanted the two nations to be friendly to each other. In this regard, India adopted several positive postures towards China such as India's efforts for localizing the conflict in Korea, its advocacy of China's entry into United Nations (UN) and its unswerving support to China on the question of integration of Taiwan. All these moves, on the part of India were highly respected by the Chinese. These developments helped in the amplification of friendly relations between India and China which led to the exchange of state visits by the Prime Ministers of the two states. Jawaharlal Nehru visited China twice in 1954 and in 1956 and the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai paid four visits² to India between June 1954 and January 1957 (Appadorai and Rajan, 1985: 114).

Tibet Issue

It was the Tibet issue which led to cracks in the cordial relations between the two states. Though a British legacy, it led to the stress and strain in the friendly relations between the two states even after their independence. Back to pre-independence period, the British India recognized the Chinese suzerainty over Tibet subject to internal autonomy and British presence in Tibet. Naturally, after independence India inherited from the British the political and economic rights in Tibet. In line with the Britishers, India also accredited suzerainty of China over Tibet, but subject to Tibet's status as an autonomous unit.

On the other side, all Chinese leaders from Kuomintang nationalists to Communists regarded Tibet as an integral part of China. The Tibetan liberation became the most focal issue on the agenda of liberating the Chinese territories lost in the past. To this effect, the Chinese leadership enunciated the 'Five Finger Theory', that Tibet is China's Palm and Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and NFEA are its five fingers (Chengapa, 2004: 21). Thus the Chinese leadership declared that liberation of Tibet was one of the basic tasks of the PLA. Finally on October 7, 1950 the PLA entered Tibet contrary to the mutual understanding between India and China over Tibet. The Indian government sent a special note to China expressing its regret over the decision to liberate Tibet by force. India argued that the Tibet problem should be resolved by negotiations and the legitimate Tibetan claim to autonomy within the framework of Chinese suzerainty. However, China regarded it as an Indian interference into its internal affairs and stated that, India has raised objections as a result of having been influenced by imperialists and asserted that 'Tibet is

an integral part of Chinese territory' besides the problem of Tibet is entirely a domestic. In this regard, India maintained that it had accepted Tibet as a part of China and that Dalai Lama was being treated in India as head of religion, the Chinese continuous to suspect India's bona fides. Chinese representatives in UN openly stated that it was India that provoked the revolt in Tibet which led to the flight of Dalai Lama as well as several thousand refugees from their country. They were given shelter and treated as government in exile in India (Sharma, 2003a: 4). However, India while accepting Chinese suzerainty in Tibet made it clear that she had no territorial and political ambitions in Tibet. India was particularly concerned about Tibetan autonomy and certain Indian commercial and cultural rights inherited from historical usages, traditions and agreements.

There was a great demand from several quarters in India particularly from the public that India should change its policy towards China, but its policy of peaceful settlement of differences with China did not change. Jawaharlal Nehru was of the view that militarily weak India could do nothing other than accept the fait accompli in Tibet. In this way Tibet fell completely into the hands of Communist China. It was left with no other choice than to negotiate on Chinese terms. In order to live peacefully under Chinese suzerainty, Tibet found it essential to develop friendly relations with China and accordingly signed the 'Sino-Tibetan Seventeen Points Agreement in 1951'. The Seven Points in this Agreement were:

1. the Tibetan people shall return to the big family of the Motherland- The People's Republic of China;
2. the Central People's Government shall be responsible for conducting external affairs of Tibet;
3. the Tibetan people will have the right of national regional autonomy under the leadership of Central People's Government;
4. the existing political system of Tibet including the powers of Dalai Lama will not be altered;
5. Tibetan people will enjoy the freedom of religious belief;
6. Tibetan army shall be reorganized and incorporated into PLA;
7. the local government of Tibet shall carry-out reforms of its own accord; there will be no compulsion on the part of Central government and in order to implement this agreement, a military and administrative committee and a military area headquarter shall be

established in Tibet (Richardson:1962).

By this agreement, the Tibetans lost the virtual de facto independent status. Though this Treaty brought Tibet into Chinese fold, but it also guaranteed Tibet's regional autonomy.

The occupation of Tibet by the China, have far-reaching effects on Sino-Indian relations. The two nations were now face-to-face in the Himalayas with the disappearance of Tibet as a Buffer State. After Tibet ceased to act as buffer state between China and India, their problems began to take shape. This was because the Tibetan borders became an issue directly between the Chinese and Indian governments and this enhanced the security perception of India regarding its northern frontiers.

“India-China Agreement on Trade and Intercourse” (1954) or Panchsheel

The beginning of a new phase in Sino-India relations was initiated with the signing of the Sino-Indian Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China on April 29, 1954. The Agreement provided for the establishment of Chinese Trade Agencies in New Delhi, Kalimpong and Calcutta, while India was to have its Trade agencies in Yatung, Gyantse and Gartok (Asopa, 2005: 97). With the signing of this Agreement, India renounced the traditional position it had enjoyed in Tibet as inheritor in British Treaty rights. Moreover, as per the Preamble to the Agreement the two states have resolved to enter the present Agreement based on the following Principles (Ministry of External Affairs: Government of India).

- (a) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- (b) mutual non-aggression;
- (c) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs;
- (d) equality and mutual benefit and
- (e) Peaceful co-existence.

The agreement was regarded as the most important step by India towards world peace and mainly between China and India. Thus, while suggesting the incorporation of Panchsheel in the Preamble of the India-China Agreement, Nehru contemplated that this would ensure peace and friendship between India and China as the latter would abide by the principles which have been 'authored' by its Prime Minister Zhou Enlai. He was hopeful of its positive impact on the political environment of Asia and thought that implementation of Panchsheel would generate peace in the region.

Though this treaty was regarded as milestone in strengthening the mutual relationship between

the two nations there were also some critics of it. For example, while criticizing Nehru in the Parliament on May 15, 1954, Acharya Kripalani warned, "China has demolished a Buffer State; in international politics when a buffer state is abolished by a powerful nation that nation is considered to have aggressive designs on its neighbors" (Rowland, 1967: 86). He was particularly referring to the conceding of Chinese claims over Tibet. Through this Agreement, India has recognized Chinese suzerainty over Tibet. Nevertheless, the general reaction in India to the new pact was favorable. In this regard, Nehru said, we have done no better thing than this since we became independent. He was hopeful of its positive impact on the political environment of Asia and thought that implementation of Panchsheel would generate peace in the region (Asopa, 2005: 90). Subsequently, the bi-lateral relations between India and China were marked by the Hindi-Chini Bhai- Bhai (Indians and Chinese are brothers) phase till it rapidly deteriorated from late fifties.

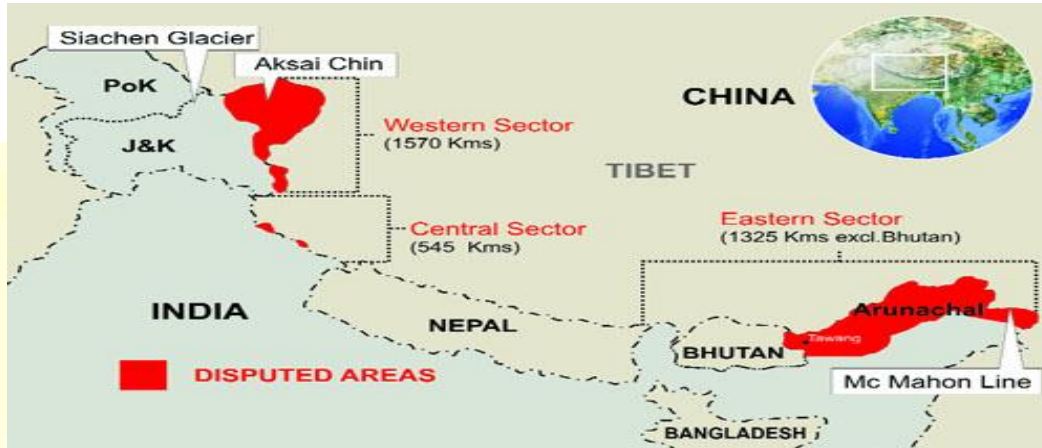
Sino-India Skirmishes

There was a popular uprising in Tibet (1959) against the China's imposition of centralized state structure. The Sino-Tibetan Agreement of May 23, 1951 had included Tibet into the 'big family of motherland'- The People's Republic of China (Jetly, 1979: 55). The Treaty however, permitted Tibet regional autonomy and continuation of existing political system. However, soon after tightening its control over Tibet, China step by step eliminated Indian influence from Tibet. All these developments have a direct impact on India's political interests. In addition to close cultural contacts between the Indian and Tibetan people, India has also inherited, as a successor state, certain economic and political rights in Tibet from the British Indian government. The Indian compassion towards Tibet and the political asylum to Dalai Lama and his followers (nearly ten thousand) baffled China. China responded with an extreme anger and started taking anti-India moves both at regional as well as international level. The Indian traders and nationals in Tibet were also harassed. India's relations with China deteriorated further when the later crushed the Tibetan uprising.

It was on January 23, 1959 that Mr. Chou Enlai, in a letter to Mr. Nehru, for the first, questioned the established boundary between India and China. Further, it was on September 1959, the Government of China, for the first time, laid a formal claim to 50,000 square miles of Indian Territory in the Ladakh and in North-East Frontier Agencies³. The boundary between India and China has been divided into three sectors- the western sector, the central sector and the eastern

sector. For better understanding the Sino-Indian disputed border areas, see the below mentioned Map-1.

Map.1
Sino-Indian Disputed Areas



Note: Western Sector: This includes the border between Jammu and Kashmir and Xinjiang and Tibet. India claims that China is occupying 43,000 sq km in this sector, including 5180 sq km illegally ceded to it by Pakistan. Aksai Chin provides China access to Pakistan through PoK and a rail and road link from the Pakistani coast into the Tibetan hinterland gives China an alternate route for bulk movement of its energy supplies. **Central Sector:** This includes borders shared by Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand with Tibet. Shipki La and Kaurik areas in HP and areas around Pulam, Thag La, Barahori, Kungri Bingri La, Laphthal and Sangha in Uttarakhand are disputed. Though Chinese territorial claims in this sector are dwarfed by those in the other two sectors, small pockets of disputes continue to exist. **Eastern Sector:** China disputes India's sovereignty over 83,743 sq km, mostly in Arunachal Pradesh. Tawang, Bum La, Asaphi La and Lo La are among the sensitive points in this sector. Strategically vital Tawang holds the key to the defense of the entire sub-Himalayan space in this sector. Chinese occupation of Arunachal would threaten the Brahmaputra plains and cut-off the north-eastern states.

Source: Tuteja, Ashok, 2012, 'Border dispute with China Still far from Settled', The Tribune, On Line Edition, available URL: <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121023/edit.htm>

From mid and late fifties, small clashes begun in all these sectors, first in central sector then in western sector and finally in eastern sector along the McMahon Line. China adopted an attitude that its boundary with India had never been formally delineated (Mishra, 2004: 13). Therefore, it called for consultation and conciliation on the basis of traditional customary lines. India

however, argued that the boundary was well defined on both natural historical grounds in the west and juridical grounds in the east and it refused further negotiations for the border. The border conflict is rooted in the disputed status of the McMahon Line, which defines the border between India and Tibet according to the 1914 Simla Convention between British India and Tibet⁴. The territorial claim of India is based on this agreement. However, China considers Tibet as a local Government without treating-making authority and thus challenges the validity of the colonial era boundary agreement involving Tibet (Mitchell and Bajpae, 2007: 157). It must be reiterated here that neither the Kuomintang (KMT) nor the Communist regimes of China ever acknowledged the McMahon Line.

In 1954, the border issue was raised by Prime Minister Nehru. He brought into the notice of Zhou Enlai certain Chinese maps which showed the large areas of Indian Territory within China. In reply, Chou Enlai said the map was an 'Old' reproduction of a publication from the "pre-liberation period" and that as his government was busy it would do the needful soon (Chengapa, 2004: 20). Again in December, 1958 Nehru pointed out that the continued misrepresentation of India's border in Chinese maps should be rectified as soon as possible. In reply, the Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai claimed some forty thousand (40000) square miles of Indian Territory in the eastern and western sectors.

The Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai, visited India on April 1960. He held discussions with Nehru and other Indian leaders on the boundary issue. Though it was a serious attempt to settle the border issue, but the parties could not reach an agreement on boundary dispute. A brief joint communiqué issued on 25 April, stated that the talks did not result in resolving the differences that have arisen. However, both sides agreed that officials examine all the historical evidence including documents and records and submit report for the consideration of two governments. It was in December, 1960 that the two divergent reports were published by two sides. Thus the officials failed to reach consensus on any of the fundamental issues on agenda. It failed because "neither side was willing to surrender its territorial claims or make reasonable concessions, for to do so would be against the national security interests of each other" (Sandhu, 2008 : 2)

The Border War and Colombo Proposals

It was on September 8, 1962 that the People's Liberation Army (PLA) marched across the well established McMahon Line in the eastern sector and thereafter, the Chinese invasion on October 20, 1962 all along the border from eastern sector to western sector changed the entire character

of India-China relations overpowering the limited Indian frontier posts.

At the same time Chinese Premier, Chou En-Lai proposed the following three-point cease fire formula on October 24, 1962 (Jetly, 1979: 172).

1. Pending a peaceful settlement, both parties would respect the Line of Actual Control (LAC) between the two sides along the entire Sino- Indian border and the armed forces of each side would withdraw 20 kms from this line.
2. Provided the Indian government agreed to this proposal, China would withdraw its frontier guards in the eastern sector to the north of the LAC, while both China and India would simultaneously undertake not to cross the line of control in the middle and western sectors.
3. Talks between the two Prime Ministers would be held once again to seek a friendly settlement.

However, Nehru while rejecting the proposals replied on October 27, that India would hail any Chinese representatives for peaceful settlement, provided China reverted to the position as it prevailed all along the boundary prior to 8 September 1962. Meanwhile once again China launched a massive attack on the eastern front on November 15, 1962 on the Sino-Indian border which resulted in the quick dissipation of Indian opposition in some other regions also. On November 21, 1962 the Chinese government unilaterally announced a ceasefire along the entire border and withdrawal of armed forces to 20 kms behind the 1959 Line of Actual Control as existing on November 7, 1959. The statement further warned that if Indian troops continue their attacks after the ceasefire or cross the LAC and recover positions prior to 8 September, 1962 China would fight back. The Chinese also expressed the hope that if Indian government agreed to take corresponding measures, Sino-Indian negotiations could be initiated, which would include 20 kms withdrawal by both the sides and setting up a demilitarized zone, the establishment of check posts by each party on its side of the LAC. However, Nehru while rejecting the Chinese proposals once again said that, “there could be no negotiations unless the position existing on September 8, 1962 was restored” (Jetly, 1979: 189). As a result of the war, India and China withdrew their ambassadors from the respective countries but their embassies continued to function in a routine manner.

In order to break the stalemate and provide a basis for agreed ceasefire arrangements, the representatives of Six Afro-Asian countries (Ceylon now Sri Lanka, Burma, Indonesia,

Cambodia, U.A.R. and Ghana) met at Colombo between December 10-12, 1962 and made certain proposals regarding the peaceful settlement of Sino-Indian stand-off (Sharma, 1999b : 65). The six Afro-Asian nations called on both India and China to settle their differences peacefully by evolving a 'Ceasefire Formula' which was later known as Colombo proposals. The Colombo proposals provided that,

1. In the western sector, the Chinese should withdraw twenty kilometers of the traditional customary line as claimed by China without any corresponding withdrawal on the Indian side. The vacated areas would be demilitarized zone to be manned by civilian posts of both sides.
2. In the eastern sector, the line of Actual Control (LAC) which was recognized by both the sides was to be treated as a ceasefire line.
3. So far as the middle sector was concerned, the proposals recommended the status quo to be maintained.

"The Conference believes", said this unanimously adopted document, "that these (Colombo) proposals, which could help in consolidating the cease-fire, once implemented, should pave the way for discussion between representatives entailed in the cease-fire position" (Sandhu, 2008 : 18). Thus, these proposals attempted to provide an equitable and fair basis for further negotiations between the two nations. While India accepted these proposals after seeking some clarifications, China rejected it and asked for negotiations without any pre condition. Further they refused to let Indian troops reoccupy and establish civil check posts in Chinese vacated areas and they also refused to accept India's continuous demand of seven civilian posts in Ladakh (Western frontier)

Post-War Relationship

The altercation in the Sino-Indian relations continued in the years following the death of Jawaharlal Nehru. The new Prime Minister, Lal Bhadr Shastri, reiterated the Indian government's willingness to consider China's vacation of its civilian posts in Ladakh as fulfillment of Colombo proposals'. However, China showed no preference to accept the Colombo Proposals as a basis for negotiations with India. It continued to keep the tension on the Sino-Indian borders alive and also carried on hostile propaganda against India's domestic and international policies. The relations between China and India further deteriorated when on October 16, 1964 China exploded atom bomb and thereby conducted its first nuclear tests. The

nuclear tests conducted by China increased the level of India's threat perception. Further during the Indo-Pak War (1965), China supported Pakistan and used every possible means to pressurize India. It even accused India of intruding into Chinese territory. Prior to Indo-Pak War, China and Pakistan concluded a boundary protocol on March, 1965 which involved the territory in Jammu and Kashmir. China which was already in possession of about 15000 sq. miles of Kashmir territory, through this Sino-Pak Protocol, Pakistan had handed over another 2000 sq. miles to it. India termed it as "legally invalid and politically mischievous" and categorically rejected the protocol (Mishra, 2004: 27). China also reiterated its territorial claims on the eastern and western sectors of the border and carried out a series of minor intrusion across the border. Thus, during 1966, Chinese hostile activities kept the fear alive on the border.

In 1969, the Cultural Revolution⁵ came to an end in China. China began modernization in its internal and external policies. On the boundary question, China declared that pending the settlement, the status quo on the boundary should be maintained and conflict avoided. Thus, China showed more flexibility in its approach towards India. India responded favorably to the Chinese post-revolution mood of conciliation and moderation.

However, this warmth in the relations between the two states during 1970s was short lived due to the developments in East Pakistan now (Bangladesh). China accused India of interfering into the internal affairs of Pakistan. On December 3, 1971, the war between Indian and Pakistan broke out in the Eastern and western fronts. During the Indo-Pak war, China adopted various techniques to pressurize India but played a very limited role in the war as compared to 1965 Indo-Pak war. All these developments gave a big jolt to the process of normalization of relations between India and China. However, with the conclusion of Shimla Agreement (1972) between India and Pakistan, China slotted its attitude towards India.

Sino-Indian Rapprochement

During the mid seventies, there took some significant changes in both the China's and India's internal politics. These changes which were mostly political in nature provided an opportunity for both the states to reorient their policies towards each other. In China the new leader Ding Xiaoping started the programme of modernization. For this purpose, China took steps to improve its relations with neighbors because peaceful environment on her border was necessary for the realization of this programme. Moreover, China also come to realize the India's new role and status. To begin with, India's refusal to sign Soviet sponsored Asian Collective Security Treaty

(ACST) convinced China of India being independent in its foreign policy choices. Again India had become the most dominant power centre in South Asia after the disintegration of Pakistan in 1971. Further Chinese linked Indo-Soviet friendship with Indo-China hostility and improvement of Indo-China relations was considered necessary in distancing India from Soviet Union. It was in this Context that the demand for improvement of Sino-Indian relations gradually became stronger.

In 1977, for the first time the non-Congress party (Junta Party) came to power at the Centre in India. China looked at the change of government from Congress to non-Congress as positively and hoped that the new government would reorient its foreign policy towards China in a positive manner. The Junta government was also interested in strengthening India's relation with China. It was prepared to respond positively to every little gesture from the Chinese side and do everything possible to sustain the atmosphere of expectation utilizing every possible opportunity to consolidate and carry forward the efforts for improved relations (Sharma, 2003: 8). For this purpose, Atal Behari Vajpayee the then Indian External Affairs Minister paid a visit to China in 1979. The main agenda of his visit was to exchange views with Chinese leaders regarding the normalization of relations between the two states. During these talks, Vajpayee identified the border problem as the key obstacle to the normalization of Sino-Indian relations. The Chinese also agreed that the boundary question should not prevent us from improving our relations in other fields. It was agreed that the five principles of peaceful co-existence (Panchsheel) should be the basis of normalization of bilateral relations and settlement of border disputes.

While Vajpayee was still in China holding discussions with the Chinese leaders, China attacked Vietnam. Deng Xiaoping, Chinese Premier while talking to the press said "We shall teach Vietnam a lesson as we have taught one to India in 1962 (Sharma, 2003: 11). Subsequently, Vajpayee had to cut short his visit. Under severe criticism in Parliament, the government of India finally denounced the Chinese action as an aggression against Vietnam. Thus, the Chinese aggression on Vietnam halted the positive environment which was created by Vajpayee's visit to China.

The Junta regime collapsed in 1979 and Mrs. Indira Gandhi once again came to power in January, 1980. The Chinese premier, Hua Guofeng, on January 15, 1980 congratulated Mrs. Indira Gandhi on her assumption of the office of premiership. Though India and China differed considerably on many issues yet both countries had been realizing the need to get away from

conflictual relationship and to reduce the tension. Mrs. Gandhi was aware of the fact that any policy of leaning towards the Soviet Union would not serve India's long term security interests. She realized that India's long term interests could be served only by expanding its ties with the United States and improving relations with China. China, on the other hand also came to the conclusion that more it denounced India, the closer it would push it towards Soviet Union. After Deng Xiaoping emerged as the supreme leader of China and his launching of modernization, this thinking was in consonance with the general thrust of economic taking precedence over politics. It was during mid-eighties that China began to cultivate balanced relations with both Super Powers- U.S.A. and Soviet Union and advocated peaceful co-existence. It was necessary from the Chinese view point because it helped in weakening Soviet opposition to Sino-India friendly relations and mitigated Indian fear of US-China-Pakistan axis against India.

In order to recommence negotiations on border issue, it was on June 1980 that the Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping revived Zhou Enlai's "Package proposal" of 1960 by proposing that "Beijing would recognize the Line of Actual Control in the eastern sector if India recognized the status-quo in the western sector" (Sharma, 2003 : 98). But the package deal was discarded by India as it intended to legitimize Chinese occupation in western sector between 1959 and 1967. While rejecting the Deng's Proposal, Indian government maintained, after all late Premier Zhou Enlai had proposed particularly the same thing in New Delhi talks of 1960 and the Indian side had rejected it. Deng now proposed that in the eastern sector, China could recognize the McMahon Line as demanded by India; in return India could concede Aksai Chin to China in the Western sector (Ramakant, 1988: 69). However, it did not offer any territorial compensation to India. On the other hand, India wanted to settle the border question in accordance with the national honor and interests of both the sides on the basis of equality.

On June 16, 1981, the Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Houng Hua visited India. It was the first important visit to India by a Chinese leader since the late Premier Zhou Enlai's visit in 1960. Haung Hau held extensive talks with Indian leaders on international and bilateral issues. After the visit of Haung to India, both sides held eight rounds of talks concerning border negotiations between December 1981 and November, 1987. Though these talks initially raised hopes far resolving the border dispute between India and China but these talks achieved nothing because both sides charged one another of military intrusion into each other's territory. Sino-Indian relations deteriorated further during the mid-1980s following the Indian allegations about

Chinese infiltration in the Sumdurong Chu valley in the Twang area which India claimed to be within its territory. Besides it, there were two other developments that strained the Sino-Indian relations further. The first was the conferment of statehood to Arunachal Pradesh by India and the second was to organize military exercise (Operation Chequre Board 1966-1987) along the Sino-Indian border (Bannerji and Bhattacharya, 2001: 43-44). The Chinese regarded these moves as provocative and started moving troops to Tibet. With these developments, the second Sino-India border war became inevitable. However, both the states had embarked on plans for economic modernization and required peace for the attainment of these objectives. It was this realization that had pulled the two sides away from the path of military confrontation.

The relaxation in international tensions as a result of the détente in U.S.-Soviet relations, improvement in Sino-Soviet relations and other international factors provided a fresh initiative for improvement in Sino-Indian relations. It was in this context that Rajiv Gandhi visited China in December 1988. Following his visit, Sino-India relations became more cordial than at any time since the mid-1950s (Graver, 1996: 323). It was the first visit to China by an Indian Prime Minister since Jawaharlal Nehru (1954) (Sharma, 2003: 102). During his visit both sides agreed that the boundary question should be settled through peaceful and friendly negotiations on the basis of Panchsheel. Besides, both the sides decided to set-up a Joint Working Group (JWG) on boundary issues, which will make recommendations for the overall solution of the boundary question. They also agreed to develop relations in diverse fields like science and technology, civil aviation to establish direct air links and on cultural exchanges. The major factor which compelled both India and China to move in the direction of normalization of their relation was their common pre-occupation with the tasks of development. Rajiv Gandhi talked much about Indian going into 21st Century (Ramakant, 1988: 69). For this purpose, he called for a process of modernization on all fronts. The convergence of this approach with Deng Xiaoping's approach to modernization in Post-Mao China, represents a significant trend. All these developments gave new impetus to the process of rapprochement between the two Asian powers.

On December, 1991 the Chinese Premier Li Peng paid a visit to India and it was the first visit by a Chinese Prime Minister to India since Zhou Enlai's visit in 1960. During his visit to India, he held wide talks and stressed that efforts would be made to arrive at mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question. On the question of Sino-Indian JWG on the boundary question, both sides believed that it had enhanced mutual understanding. Further, they agreed to maintain peace

and restraint clashes with each other in the area along with the LAC. It was also agreed upon by both the sides that the periodic meetings between the military personnel in the border areas should be held on regular basis.

In the light of above mentioned developments, it becomes clear that both sides had taken a step by step approach to resolve the boundary questions. Though the process of resolving the border dispute was slow one with its phases of ups and downs, but the differences on the border issue had not been allowed to affect the overall progress of rapprochement between India and China.

Relations in Post Cold War era till 1996

The process of rapprochement in the Sino-India relations gained further momentum in the post-cold war period wherein the global strategic environment had come under extensive realignments. To begin with, the end of Cold war brought dramatic changes in the global strategic environment. The Soviet Union was no more and the U.S.A. emerged as the sole Super Power. The bi-polarity was replaced by unipolarity. China and India found themselves at the receiving end in such a unipolar global order. China was especially perplexed with U.S.A.'s pronouncements on the issues of human rights, trade issues, and nuclear technology transfers and weapons sale and India which was regarded as the close ally of former Soviet Union has also come under pressure from U.S.A. on a range of issues like nuclear weapons and missile proliferation, economic liberalization and intellectual property rights (Makik, 1995: 319). China and India were fully aware that the main objective of American strategy in the post-Cold War world was to check the emergence of any great power that can challenge American dominance in anywhere in Europe or in Asia. Further both China and India aimed to emerge as independent power centers in a multipolar world where regional powers will dominate in their respective spheres of influence. Thus, both China and India aspires benefit in making common cause with each other so as to resist arm-twisting by the United States. It was this realization which led to the further softening of Sino-Indian relations in the post cold war era. The rapprochement process was initiated with the Indian President R. Venkataraman's visit to China in 1992 (Chengapa, 2004 : 280). During his visit, both nations expressed satisfaction at the working of the JWG and agreed to deepen economic cooperation. They also laid emphasis on taking concrete steps to promote mutual Confidence Building Measures (CBM's) including mutual troop reductions and regular meetings of local military commanders. Border trade was also resumed in July, 1992 after a gap of more than 30 years, the Indian initiative of sending its

Defense Minister Sharad Pawar to China in July 1992, was a milestone in Security Building Measures (SBM's) between two neighbors. During his visit, the two sides agreed to develop academic military, scientific and technological exchanges between the two states.

The major step forward in strengthening the growing process of Sino-India rapprochement was the visit of Prime Minister P.V. Narsimha Rao to China in September, 1993. During his visit, Mr. Rao and Chinese Premier Le Pang signed the "Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas" (United Nations Peacemaker: 1993). This agreement proved to be a significant development in the history of bilateral relations between the two nations as it stabilized relations on the one hand and initiated numerous Confidence Building Measures (CBM's) on the other hand.

Further, an India-China Expert Group was setup by both the nations to demarcate the LAC and discuss troop reduction. This group held two meetings, one in February, 1994 and another in April, 1994. The ways and means about the maintenance of peace and tranquility over the common border were also discussed by them. Moreover, India and China relations witnessed exchange of visits throughout the year 1994. These visits included the important ones like the Indian Chief of Army Staff General B.C. Joshi's and the Chinese Defense Minister Chi Hation's to each other's countries. The Indian Vice-President K.R. Narayan also paid a three day visit to China from November 21. For promoting cultural ties between India and China, a cultural festival namely "Festival of India" was held in Beijing on May 6. All these factors acted as a mile stone in the normalization of the relations between China and India. All these factors and more importantly the two visits by Indian Prime Ministers Rajiv Gandhi (1988) and Narsimaha Rao (1993) to China proved to be landmarks in the normalization process between India and China.

Conclusion

After a brief historical background of Sino-India relations, it can be observed that there have been constant interactions and exchanges between India and China for the last two thousand years. With their independence in the mid-twentieth century, both the states strengthened their close bilateral relations characterized by mutual support and cooperation on many decisive regional, national and international issues. However, in the late fifties the relationship between the two states deteriorated over the border disputes and Tibet issue which culminated in the

'Mini Sino-Indian War' (1962). Thereafter, the mutual relationship between the two states entered an era of cold war characterized by mutual distrust, suspicion and hostility which lasted for about two decades. The process of normalization of Sino-India relations started from late 1970s. During the late 1980s and especially after the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's landmark visit to China in 1988, an unprecedented normalization of Sino-India relations was reached. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and subsequent suspension of the Cold War it is satisfying to notice that India and China are showing a strong will to turning a new page of their relations by striving to dissolve the barriers in Sino-Indian relations left over by the recent history of bitterness and resume their traditional friendship and confidence in maintaining peace in the region.

Endnotes

1. The Silk Road was an important ancient trade route between China, India, Persia, Arabia, Greek and Rome. Because Silk comprised a large portion of trade along this road, it was named 'the Silk Road' by Ferdinand Von Richthofen, an eminent German Geographer in 1877.
2. Among these four visits, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai paid three state visits to India in a less than two months from November 28 to December 10, 1956, December 30 to January 3 and again from January 24 to 26, 1957. All these frequent visits indicated the zenith of Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai phase (Indians and Chinese are brothers).
3. Chinese Aggression in War and Peace - Letters of The Prime Minister of India. 1962. Publications Division Ministry of Information and Broadcasting Government of India : New Delhi
4. In 1914, the British India Government made an attempt to delimit the north-eastern length of the frontier. For this purpose, the Simla Conference was held in April, 1914 wherein the representatives of British India, China Tibet exchanged their views with one another. The British India and Tibetan representatives announced their acceptance of the line of demarcation that came to be known as the McMahon Line (named after the

British Plenipotentiary Sir Henry McMahon) between British India and Tibet. However, the Chinese delegate did not ratify the Simla Agreement. It was here that the Line (McMahon) became controversial.

5. The Cultural Revolution or The Great Cultural Revolution was a complex social upheaval that began as a struggle between Mao Zedong and other top party leaders for dominance of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and went on to affect all of China with its call for continuing revolution. This revolution left deep impact upon Chinese society.

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