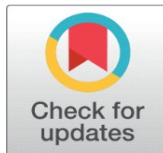


BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA: PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SELF-RELIANCE

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ABSTRACT

China and India have a rich history of vibrant civilisations and diverse cultures, with distinct political, economic, and cultural ties. Despite their longstanding relationship, trade disputes and border conflicts have deteriorated in the modern era. India's historical distinction as the first non-aligned nation to establish diplomatic relations with China underscores the unique background of their interactions. Indian prime ministers have been working to strengthen ties with China, but hostility and rivalry have been common. The 1962 China-India conflict serves as a notable example of the tensions between the two nations. This paper investigates how the economic cooperation between China and India can contribute to sustainable development, examining the historical context and current diplomatic efforts. It delves into how cooperation between China and India can positively influence regional stability and contribute to global economic growth. Despite their long history of territorial disputes and military conflicts, there exists significant potential for mutual development and prosperity through sustained diplomatic efforts and cooperation in various sectors. By fostering stronger economic ties, both countries can benefit from increased trade and investment opportunities, leading to mutual growth and stability in the region. Furthermore, collaboration in areas such as infrastructure development and technology transfer can help address common challenges and pave the way for a more prosperous future for both nations.

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1. INTRODUCTION

China and India established diplomatic relations on 1 April 1950. During the 1950s, Mao Zedong of China and Jawaharlal Nehru of India jointly advocated the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, emphasising mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs. These principles guided the diplomatic interactions between the two countries, fostering a period of cooperation and understanding. In 1959, the relations between China and India deteriorated due to territorial disputes over the Aksai Chin region and the McMahon Line, leading to heightened tensions between the two nations. In October 1962, a large-scale armed conflict erupted along the China-India border primarily due to territorial disagreements and strategic interests, resulting in significant casualties and reshaping the dynamics of the region. After the resumption of the ambassadors' exchange in 1976, relations between China and India gradually improved. In 1988, Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's historic visit to China symbolised a significant milestone and

laid the foundation for a new era of cooperation and dialogue between the two nations, fostering mutual understanding and diplomatic ties. Since then, high-level exchanges between the two countries have increased, and the leaders of each country have visited each other multiple times.

Since the beginning of the new century, exchanges between China and India have become increasingly close. In June 2003, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China, and the two sides signed the Declaration on Principles of China-India Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation. In April 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India, and during the visit, the two sides signed a Joint Statement, announcing the establishment of a Strategic Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity. In November 2006, Chinese President Hu Jintao paid a state visit to India. The two sides issued a joint declaration and formulated ten strategies to deepen the strategic cooperative partnership between the two countries. In January 2008, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited China, and during the visit, the two countries signed the China-India Joint Vision for the 21st Century, outlining their shared vision for future cooperation. The year 2010 marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and India, which began in 1950. In May, Indian President Pratibha Devisingh Patil paid a state visit to China. In December, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India, and during the visit, the two sides signed a joint communiqué between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India, emphasising their shared commitments.

Methodology: This paper is primarily based on secondary data sources that were collected from different published papers, government reports, books, news reports, etc. The data and figures in this paper are also gathered from secondary sources.

2. OBJECTIVE

- To explore the important dimensions of bilateral relation between India and China
- To explore the sustainable relations between Sino-India for self-reliance.

3. OVERVIEW OF CHINA AND INDIA RELATIONS

In 2011, it was named the Year of China-India Exchange. 2012 was designated as the Year of China-India Friendship and Cooperation. During the BRICS Summit, Chinese President Hu Jintao met with Indian Prime Minister Singh, and at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development, Premier Wen Jiabao held a meeting with him.

From 2013 to 2019, leaders of the two countries exchanged visits or held bilateral meetings on multilateral occasions.

In 2013, China-India relations maintained a momentum of steady development. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang paid an official visit to India, and the two sides issued a joint statement.

The year 2014 is declared as the Year of China-India Friendly Exchanges. In September 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to India, and the two sides issued a Joint Statement on Building an Even Closer Partnership for Development. In April 2020, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Premier Li Keqiang, and State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi exchanged congratulatory messages with President Kovind, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Minister of External Affairs Jaishankar, respectively, on the 70th anniversary of China-India diplomatic relations.

The China-India boundary negotiations have continued to move forward. Additionally, the border areas have generally maintained peace and tranquility. The economic cooperation between the two countries has been expanding. Additionally, the exchanges and cooperation in military and security fields have been developing steadily, while the exchanges and cooperation in people-to-people and cultural fields have been expanding.

China and India have maintained communication and coordination in the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, BRICS, the G20, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and China-Russia-India mechanisms. They have worked together in areas such as climate change, energy, and food security, as well as in the reform of international financial institutions and global governance to safeguard the common interests of China, India, and other developing countries.

4. BILATERAL RELATION BETWEEN CHINA ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Sixth Assessment IPCC report on Climate Change has revealed, more clearly than ever, the havoc human activity is wreaking on our ecosystems, setting off alarm bells. The alarm of 'Code red for humanity' has been sounded, indicating a critical situation for all of humanity. We are currently facing a climate cataclysm; the lack of proactive action in the past two decades has escalated the situation to levels far beyond grave. Even concerted efforts at this point may fall short of meaningfully altering the trajectory.

Just as the climate is in turmoil, so too are the bilateral relations between the giants of India and China. The relations had shown a relatively smoother trend, highlighted by the camaraderie between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping during the informal summit in Mahabalipuram in 2019. The Doklam standoff is no longer a major point of contention, as trade discussions and collaboration on regional development projects in South Asia take precedence.

5. WHY INDIA AND CHINA CAN AND NEED TO COOPERATE?

Another facet of commonality between India and China is that they are both middle-income nations developing at breakneck speed. Their growing populations, particularly in India, drive their macroeconomic goals towards achieving positive growth in all sectors, improving per capita GDP, and raising living standards. Their actions and sacrifices for environmental protection and preservation would naturally align.

Coming onto their energy portfolio, both are heavily dependent on coal and petroleum, or fossil fuels. Moving from coal and fossil fuels to renewable energy sources presents a significant challenge. Given the minimal contributions from affluent developed nations, it is crucial to make significant short-term economic changes, like cutting subsidies for fossil fuels or introducing carbon taxes, to ensure long-term sustainability. However, due to the pandemic slump, policymakers have been jolted, worsening the situation by prioritising faster economic recovery over sustainability.

As global cooperation forums face disarray, the momentum for climate action is diminishing despite the significant support it requires. The opportunity for gradual reforms has been missed. Now even expediting the transition to renewable energy could fall short in meeting the sustainability goals. The apparent flux could be countered with cooperation. Instead of pursuing individual paths, both countries could explore collaborative opportunities such as joint research projects on renewable energy technologies or sharing best practices in sustainable urban planning to leverage their strengths and address weaknesses for mutual benefit. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation is potentially a conducive platform for India and China to cooperate on the environmental front bilaterally, influencing the larger Asian multilateral community towards the goals of sustainable progress through knowledge sharing and joint initiatives.

Both countries are highly motivated towards a renewable energy future. For example, the Chinese National Energy Administration aims to transition over 40% of the nation's energy sources to nuclear and other renewables. In comparison, India is targeting 175 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2022, with 100 GW specifically from solar power. India is focusing on 175 gigawatts of renewable energy, which includes 100 GW of solar power by 2022, with a total of 450 GW of renewable energy by 2030. Although both nations encounter challenges in meeting these targets, their ample human resources and manufacturing capacity position them to attain significant carbon neutrality by the 2040s.

China excels in mass production of efficient low-cost solar panels and wind turbines, while India is known for its skilled workforce in developing innovative solar energy solutions. China can supplement India's manufacturing and also invest in Indian industrial capabilities to optimize production and manufacture of renewable supplements. Examples can include low-cost electric vehicle components, charging infrastructure and efficient battery technologies. India's premier technological institutes could become the hub of innovation towards more affordable and durable harness infrastructure for solar and wind energy technology; this cooperation would be primed upon common interests.

Similar geophysical phenomena in both nations could open up better capacity building in areas of disaster response to torrential rain, floods, water basin management, and floodwater control. Cooperation could also be on the lines of achieving sustainable development, as in expanding industrial output without sacrificing vital environmental resources. This includes collaboration on improving afforestation mechanisms, implementing sustainable forest land management, and promoting sustainable farming practices, as well as focusing on sustainable urbanization, infrastructure development, and effective population control measures. Both nations face challenges in sustainable energy transition,

environmental conservation, and disaster management, leading to closely aligned responses and cooperation strategies. Collaboratively pooling resources under these circumstances would constitute a significant achievement, benefiting the response efforts of both India and China, such as sharing technological expertise, reducing duplication of efforts, and increasing the overall impact of environmental initiatives.

6. HOW CAN INDIA AND CHINA COOPERATE IN BUILDING A GLOBAL COMMUNITY OF A SHARED FUTURE?

As two ancient Asian civilizations that have been living side by side for thousands of years, China and India share common thoughts about the future and destiny of mankind.

They have the responsibility, the ability, and the opportunity to set an example for the rest of the world with their Oriental wisdom and civilizational heritage.

The Chinese people have cherished the vision of “a world of fairness and justice for the common good” since ancient times.

Ancient Indian literature also records the motto of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam”, which means “the world is one family” in Sanskrit.

It was also used as the theme of the G20 summit held in New Delhi in September 2023.

Also, in the 1950s, India and China jointly established the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence:

Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty

- Mutual non-aggression
- Mutual non-interference
- Equality and mutual benefit
- Peaceful co-existence

7. AREAS AND PLATFORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA

Economic Cooperation: India and China are both members of the BRICS, the SCO, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and the New Development Bank (NDB). They can enhance their economic cooperation through these mechanisms and promote an open, inclusive, and balanced world economy that reflects the demands and interests of the developing countries. They can also expand their bilateral trade and investment and explore new areas of cooperation such as the digital economy, the green economy, and innovation.

Security Cooperation: Both India and China are members of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament (CD).

They can cooperate in combating terrorism, extremism, and separatism, and maintain regional peace and stability.

Cultural Cooperation: India and China are both ancient civilizations with rich and diverse cultures.

They can enhance their cultural cooperation and mutual learning through increased people-to-people contact. They can also increase their exchanges and interactions in the fields of education, tourism, sports, youth, and media and foster mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

Environmental Cooperation: India and China are both parties to the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity. They can enhance their environmental cooperation and coordination on issues such as emission reduction, renewable energy, biodiversity conservation, and disaster management. They can also support each other in implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

8. BENEFITS OF INDIA AND CHINA COOPERATION

8.1. ECONOMIC GROWTH AND TRADE OPPORTUNITIES

Market Expansion: Both India and China possess massive consumer markets. Collaboration between the two could lead to greater trade opportunities, expanding markets for goods and services.

Complementary Economies: China's manufacturing strength and infrastructure, coupled with India's services sector and skilled workforce, can create a symbiotic economic relationship.

This collaboration can fill gaps and leverage the strengths of each other's economies.

Technological Advancements and Innovation: Collaborative efforts in technology, research, and innovation can lead to breakthroughs in various sectors such as renewable energy, healthcare, and artificial intelligence.

Pooling resources and expertise could accelerate advancements in areas like space exploration, cybersecurity, and climate change mitigation.

Global Governance and Diplomacy: By aligning in global issues, both countries can act as a counterbalance to unilateral actions by other global powers, promoting a more multipolar world order.

Together, India and China could influence international forums, speaking with a collective voice on global issues such as trade, security, and climate change.

Working in tandem could strengthen their diplomatic outreach, potentially leading to more effective resolutions.

9. CONCLUSION

With China and India both aiming at industrialized development for their future economic growth, balancing environmental impacts with economic considerations is crucial for both countries. It is essential to share best practices for achieving the right balance. While conflict leads to mutually assured destruction for both countries, cooperation offers endless possibilities, starting with addressing the elephant in the room—climate change. While relations still face numerous challenges, policymakers should embody the adage, "Don't let perfection be the enemy of good."

Exploring cooperation on environmental sustainability is crucial. It is not only significant for its own sake but also serves as a vital catalyst for productive dialogue in other areas of a strained relationship. China and India could serve as the primary advocates for the developing world in the broader international efforts against climate change. This advocacy could establish a framework for extensive track two and three diplomacy and cooperation. Building trust through such cooperation will be beneficial; it will enhance bilateral ties for future collaborative endeavours. The peaceful coexistence of these two powers is arguably the pivotal step towards establishing a balanced world order in the upcoming decades and tackling the future's challenges.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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