

Sino-Indian Relations Since the Launch of India's “Look East” Policy

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Abstract—After the Cold War, the government of India initiated “Look East” policy actively, combining the change of the domestic and international situation, which opened a new era for the relationship between India and China. In the implementation of the “Look East” policy, the relations between India and China are getting better on the whole. Increasingly frequent bilateral exchange and cooperation have emerged in more areas which have involved various contents. But at the same time, negative factors affecting the development of Sino-Indian relations still exist, which call for the wisdom of the two countries to solve the problems, so as to successfully promote the development of bilateral relations.

Keywords—India; Sino-Indian relations; “Look East” policy

I. INTRODUCTION

After the Cold War, the situation in South Asia experienced great changes. The union of Soviet and India no longer existed. This change made India to re-assess its security interests, reconsider and adjust their foreign policy. The government of India therefore proposed “Look East” policy. In the process of implementation of the policy, how to maintain and improve better relations with China has become an important part of India's foreign policy for Indian government. In the past 20 years, the overall development of Sino-Indian relations is fairly well; exchanges and cooperation have become increasingly frequent. But in the meanwhile, there are some uncertainties which will undermine Sino-Indian relations.

II. HIGH-LEVEL VISITS IMPROVING DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Since the 1990s, there have been good signs for stable, cooperative Sino-Indian relations. High-level visits between the two governments happened more frequently, and the diplomatic relations between the two countries are on the rise as a whole. High-level and state visits have been acting as important confidence-building measures between the two countries.

In September 1993, Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao paid a visit to China. This visit saw the conclusion of the Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility in Border Areas along the LAC. A senior level Chinese military delegation made six-day visit to India in the

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following December, aimed at fostering CBMs between the defiance forces of two countries. The two governments agreed that Sino-Indian border issue should be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultations, denying using force or threatening to use force. In November 1996, President Jiang Zemin's visit to India created a good atmosphere for the settlement of the border issue. “Both sides reaffirmed in the agreement that neither side shall use force against the other by any means or seek unilateral military support for them. The visit saw the leaders of the two countries agree to establish Constrictive and Cooperative Partnership between China and India into 21st Century, on basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence”[1]. June 2003, Prime Minister Vajpayee visited China, signed the “Declaration of Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India”. The Declaration, the first such one between the two countries, committed Beijing and New Delhi to develop a Long-term Constructive and Cooperative Partnership on the basis of Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence, mutual respect, sensitivity for the concerns of each other and equality. Both the countries emphasized that the common interest of India and China outweighed their differences and the two countries were not a threat to each other. The Indian side recognized that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the PRC in contrast to the mention that “Tibet is an Autonomous Region of China”[2]. Premier Wen Jiabao started an official visit to India in April 2005, and then China-India relations were upgraded to the new level of “strategic partner”. In January 2008, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made China as the first place of visiting in 2008, fully reflecting the importance he attached to Sino-Indian relations. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh paid visits to the other country again, in May 2013, and in October 2013, respectively. In the spring 2013, just after he'd formally taken office, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed a five-point formula to improve ties between the two countries. “Positive vibes” were detected at Xi's subsequent meeting with Singh on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Durban in March.

In the past twenty years, the Indian government has gradually got rid of the Cold War mentality, dealing with Sino-Indian relations positively and independently. India government are actively improving political relations with

China, making good effort to create better atmosphere for developing Sino-Indian relations. On the border issue, the Indian government has changed their original attitude that the boundary could not be negotiated and began to turn to peaceful way of solving the problem, avoiding military conflict with China. On the issue of Tibet, India made open acknowledgement that Tibet is a part of China's territory. After entering the new century, China and India have been on a new road of peaceful development, cooperation and friendly competition. India and China not only cooperate with each other in economic, technological, cultural fields, but also make good progress in political and military cooperation [3].

III. INCREASED DIPLOMATIC CONSENSUSES

In order to achieve economic development and seek great power status in the world, India made fundamental adjustments to its foreign policy. India adopts "Gujral Doctrine" to amend the relations with South Asian countries under the influence of "Look East" policy, maintaining good relations with other countries, especially neighboring countries, including China. China also implements the good-neighborliness policy to take good-neighborliness as an important component of its foreign policy and to actively engage in improving relations with neighboring countries. To create a stable and peaceful surrounding is always its superior purpose of its foreign policy. At this point, China and India share the similar views.

The biggest problem plaguing Sino-Indian relation is the boundary dispute. Since the new century, China and India leaders achieved an important consensus: On the one hand, both sides should promote the negotiation process for an early settlement of all the historical issues, including border disputes through equal consultation, based on the spirit of peace, friendship, mutual respect and understanding. And on the other hand, it should be acknowledged that the border dispute issue is a very complex task, which will be a long term problem. To solve this problem requires not only sincere, but also great patience. Therefore, both parties have agreed before the historical issues resolved, efforts to develop friendly bilateral relations should be actively made.

In recent years, both governments have increasingly recognized, as new rising powers in the world, China and India should be committed to economic development and improving people's livelihood. Mutual understanding and cooperation, developing together should be the mainstream for Sino-Indian relations. Asia and the world have enough space to accommodate the rise of China and India together. All the above are the consensus made by China and India, which have become the basis for the development of Sino-Indian relations.

IV. EXPANDED FIELDS OF COOPERATION

Improved diplomatic relations between China and India has brought growing Sino-Indian cooperation. In the past 20 years, the connotation of the Sino-Indian exchanges and cooperation has been continuously enriched. The cooperation is moving gradually from simple trading to comprehensive form involving the cooperation of economy and politics,

security and non-traditional security, international affairs and other areas. A strategic partnership is moving toward reality.

A. Economic Cooperation Developed Steadily

The economies of China and India are mutually supplementary to a great extent. The two countries can take advantage of each other's technological strong points in IT, manufacturing, agriculture, infrastructure, energy saving and environment protection. Since entering the 1990s, with substantial improvement in Sino-Indian relations, the Sino-Indian trade volume has developed dramatically. In 1990 the total size of the Sino-Indian trade was only \$ 264 million, in 1995, it increased to \$ 1.16 billion, and then \$ 18.73 billion in 2005, and in 2012 the bilateral trade volume reached \$ 66.47 billion, with amazing growth rate. In India, the interest in doing business with China is evident beyond the private sector and the central government—along with visits by a number of Indian CEOs, China has also seen visits from chief ministers of a number of Indian states, including Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh. Narendra Modi, prime ministerial candidate for the forthcoming national election for the BJP, has also traveled to China. While Modi has expressed hawkish views on China on the geopolitical front, he has expressed admiration for that country's economic achievements.

In addition, mutual investment and economic cooperation in the form of labor cooperation has also been developed. China and India presents some advantages in different fields which can be complementary to each other, such as China's infrastructure construction, foreign trade, attract investment, the traditional medicine; and India's software services industry, financial legal system and other aspects of the competitiveness of SMEs[4]. Since 1990 years, both sides have gradually expanded mutual investment toward each other. Some Chinese enterprises entered India conducting wholly-owned, joint ventures and construction projects in India, while from India the software, chemicals, consulting and other industries also started to invest in China.

B. Cultural Relations Have Been Boosted a Lot

In the past 20 years, India and China have made remarkable progress in culture exchange, and cultural relations are boosted a lot. The Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) signed in May 1988 which has laid down the broad contours of the India-China cultural cooperation was followed well and culture cooperation between the two countries developed smoothly. Important cultural projects have been completed. In February 2007, the Xuanzang memorial hall was inaugurated at Nalanda, in India. President Pratibha Devisingh Patil inaugurated an Indian style Buddhist temple in Luoyang, Henan province during her visit to China in May 2010. In June 2008, joint stamps have been released, one stamp depicting the Mahabodhi temple at Bodhgaya and the other depicting the White Horse temple at Luoyang. A Centre for Indian studies was set up in Peking University in 2003. Chairs of Indian Studies have also been established in some China universities. [5]

Various Indian cultural projects and programs such as "India Day", "International Hindi Day" and other culture

events were held regularly in China. The 60th anniversary of the establishment of India-China diplomatic relations was celebrated with much fanfare in both countries in 2010. 2012 was determined as the "The Year of Friendship and Cooperation". The latest CEP signed in October 2013 during the visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to China provides for cooperation including exchanges of visits of performing artists, officials, writers, archivists and archaeologists, organizing cultural festivals, film festivals and exchanges in the field of mass media, youth affairs and sports. The year 2014 has been declared the "Year of Friendly Exchanges" between India and China. Youth exchanges have also been encouraged. In 2012, in February and then again in November, a 100 member Chinese youth delegation visited India. A 47 member Bollywood Song and Dance Troupe is touring China in December 2012. These programs made the people of the two countries understand the other country's culture to a certain extent.

C. Military and Security Cooperation Move Quickly

Prior to the implementation of the "Look East" policy, the Sino-Indian military exchanges and cooperation was negligible. Enhanced economic and diplomatic relations inspired these two countries to promote the military contact, and the new international anti-terrorism situation speeded up the Sino-Indian military cooperation. Since Defense Minister of the two sides paid visits to the other country successfully in the end of last century, military contacts between the two countries began to get on the right track. Defense Ministers, Generals constantly paid visits; military training and exercises have become a regular; Warship visits and joint military exercises were always fruitful for both sides. China and India have also actively engaged in border talks on the border issue. So far, 17 rounds of negotiations have been held. Peacefully settling the border issue has become the consensus of the two countries. Sino-India defense and security consultations were held regularly. Till now six rounds of consultations has been completed.

D. Join Hands to Deal with International Issues

The two countries support each other in regional and global cooperation and made joint efforts to promote peace, stability and development in Asia. China and India work cooperatively in the frameworks of "BRICS", "five developing countries", "8+5", the G20 and other platforms, to safeguard the interests of developing countries, enhance the position of developing countries[6]. China and India also have specialized dialogues on issues like Afghanistan, Central Asia and counterterrorism.

India and China have also joined hands in handling many global issues such as international trade and financial issues and sustainable development, energetically safeguarding the rights and interests of developing countries and new emerging powers and facilitating improvement and reshaping of the existing international economic order.

V. UNCERTAINTIES UNDER "LOOK EAST" POLICY

In this process, some problems also exist in Sino-Indian diplomatic relations. For example, in 1998, when India was faced with the condemnation and sanctions from almost the whole world for its nuclear tests, India politicians denounced China as the main threat to India's national security. Prime Minister Vajpayee openly claimed that India's nuclear explosions were against China, which caused the bilateral relations great suffering. There are still some uncertainties in the development of Sino-Indian relations.

A. India's "Look East" Policy Itself Contains a Kind of Prevention and Containment Against China

As the two largest developing countries, China and India share similar national realities and are at similar development stages, they will inevitably encounter some competition and friction with each other, due to their similar economical and geopolitical interests. For India, while Pakistan is "a true threat", China is "the long-term rival and a potential military threat", so the India military strategy remains focusing on Pakistani and China. Under the guidance of "Look East" policy, the development process of China-India relations will always be subject to interference of various factors.

B. Mutual Trust Has Not Yet Been Fully Developed Between China and India

Border issue is the biggest problem affecting diplomat relations between China and India. From 2003, the two governments have conducted 17 rounds of boundary negotiations, but the stage of demarcating the border has not yet been reached. There were several incidents of clashes or even crises in the border areas after 1962. These clashes happened not because of any attempt to provoke a war or change the Line of Actual Control, but because the two sides have differences in perceptions of the precise locations on the ground and on the map of several points on the LAC. Such incidents cannot be ruled out in future as long as the LAC is not clearly delineated physically on the ground[7]. Before the border issue is resolved, the Sino-Indian relations will be inevitably affected by it.

In fact, while much of the mistrust and misgivings emanates from the legacy of the 1962 war between the two countries, unpleasant incident between the two countries also occurs from time to time. Unfortunately, at the same time the misleading media, which mostly cannot give an objective description of the problem, but render exaggeration or even distortion to the masses of the two countries, adds to the problem. Misunderstandings inevitably arise among common people. Meanwhile, non-governmental exchanges between China and India are still relatively small. Except for a few people to other countries to work and travel, the ordinary people never know the true situations and intentions of the other country. Most people do not trust the other country for the lack of understanding each other.

C. China's Growing Ties with India's Neighbors Become a Concern of India

China's relationship with Pakistan has been a major source of concern in India. Its role in strengthening Pakistan's conventional, missile and nuclear capabilities is especially highlighted. India also disapproves of China's assistance to Pakistan in developing projects and infrastructure in area disputed between India and Pakistan. Besides, China's growing political and economic ties with India's neighbors are also a subject of concern. Delhi watches warily increasing Chinese interactions with and involvement in countries like Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal and Sri Lanka. While China emphasizes that these activities have peaceful goals, such as economic development, some Indian experts and officer still take suspicious attitude.

D. Problems also Exist in Economic Ties

Though Sino-Indian economic ties developed rapidly, which mostly were taken as the driver for good Sino-Indian relations; unfortunately, there are some problems, too. Some Indians take Chinese goods as a threat to India. First, China's economic strength will be transferred to military ability to threaten India's safety. Second, Chinese goods sold to India will squeeze domestic and international markets for Indian factories. Some industries in India had deliberately "China goods threat". In India there's also much concern about the trade imbalance. The overall trade deficit has gone to \$40.8 billion in 2012-2013. Politicians and businessmen use 'China Threat' theory to put pressure and set obstacle on India's reform[7]. Just because of these "China Threat" words, India has initiated as many as 159 anti-dumping investigation cases since 1992 to August 2013 against China, Which create many obstacles to economic ties between the two countries[9]. There are concerns about competition with China for markets, influence and resources across the globe.

E. Indian Ocean Strategy of India Will Exert an Adverse Impact on Sino-Indian Relations

India has always been committed to being the world's major maritime power, the Indian Ocean is considered "India's Ocean", take the Indian Ocean as its sphere of influence. It's worth noting that, since 2003, the military aspect of "Look East" policy is accelerated greatly. In 2003, India and Singapore sign defense cooperation agreement in 2004, the two countries held a Defence Policy Dialogue in Singapore. The two countries also reached a military program: Singapore will be able to use military bases and facilities in India for training and exercises. India and Vietnam, military cooperation, Malaysia, Indonesia, there have been noticeable progress. In addition, India actively develops military relations with Vietnam, Japan and other countries that have diplomatic friction with China. In 2010, Indian Defense Minister Antonio and South Korean Defense Minister Kim tae-young signed a memorandum of military field; October 2012, Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard visit New Delhi, said Australia would develop closer military ties with India.

In addition, from the perspective of maintaining the safety of energy channels China cooperates with Burma, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, etc. But this benign cooperation was misinterpreted

as "Pearl chain strategy", which is against India[10]. Such speculation spurred India to take counter-measures. In recent years, India publicly involved in the South China Sea region issues to create diplomatic pressure on China and to increase China's security anxiety. These all affect Sino-Indian relations adversely.

VI. CONCLUSION

Indian policymakers tend to underplay the strategic aspects and goals of India's "Look East" policy and emphasize its cultural and economic aspects. They describe the policy as "oriented towards deepening India's engagement with the countries of East and Southeast Asia". However, the elements and the link to China play an important role in action. During the twenty years of the implementation of the "Look East" policy, diplomatic relations between India is getting better on the whole. Bilateral exchanges and cooperation have become increasingly frequent, relations and contacts are getting increasingly close, areas of cooperation are expanding steadily, and the contents have been enriched gradually. But at the same time, there are also many negative factors and issues affecting the development of Sino-Indian relations. Part of them are from historical legacy, and some are new problems emerge from the rapid development of China and India.

In addition, the adverse impact of other countries such as America also exists. Officials from some Southeast Asian countries want India to do more in interfering in the South China Sea affairs. Hillary Clinton, when she led the State Department, called for "India not just to look east, but to engage East and act East as well". Indian policymakers believe that a strong U.S.-India relationship gives them leverage with China and sends a signal to China, taking America as an offshore balancer [11]. In the future, the relations between China and India will face more challenges and difficulties. The two countries need to give full play to the wisdom of the government and the people to address the problems seriously, and develop the mutual trust between the two countries.

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