

## **Critical Analysis of Convergence and Divergence in China-India Relations**

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**ABSTRACT:** Relations between India and China are becoming increasingly tense, as both are Asia's largest and fastest growing states in today's global politics. This partnership is distinguished by obvious commonalities, such as a shared culture, a desire to reclaim dominance in international affairs, and common modernization goals. Relationships can also be troubled by a variety of challenges, the most notable of which include long-standing regional wars, arguments over local supremacy, and more generalized ambassadorial issues, particularly those involving India and China. As a result, it is conceivable to evaluate India-China relations on economic and military grounds, with certain facets of their relationship being viewed as having both advantages and disadvantages simultaneously. This paper examines the origins and current manifestation of such a fundamental dynamic in the interactions between New Delhi and Beijing over the past 75 years and shows how their strategic objectives are frequently both converging and diverging.

**KEYWORDS:** Convergence, Diplomatic Issues, Divergence, Economy, Strategic Issues.

### **Introduction**

In today's global politics, India and China's relations are becoming increasingly intertwined as the largest and fastest-growing Asian states. This symbiosis is distinguished by a number of distinct similarities, including a shared historical perception of both countries as major civilizations of universal significance, as well as a shared desire among their peoples and leaders to reclaim their position as major influencers in the global structure (Ogden, 2017; Muzaffar et al. 2018). Such shared histories and perspectives are further bolstered by joint past involvements in extremely harmful foreign involvements by Western authorities (Zhu, 2011), as well as India and China's current possession of some of the world's leading demographic, economic, territorial, and military capabilities.

Adherence to modernization and development policies binds the two organizations together, making higher levels of regional, bilateral, and international commerce a shared aim and effectively increasing their strength in all domains of international affairs (Zhu, 2011).

Given the rapid growth of their economies in recent decades (although Beijing's performance has been longer and faster than New Delhi's), both countries now play a larger role in global diplomacy than they ever have. In matters ranging from how both China and India, as developing governments,

successfully handle environmental issues to obtaining additional representation in current and innovative global organizations, there is a growing trend toward expressing comparable stresses in the expression of parallel difficulties. These perspectives are backed by persistent and lingering suspicions about the objectives driving US hegemony, which are bolstered by a shared desire to create a global arrangement based on multipolarity rather than primarily US-led unipolarity (Pant, 2011). The conviction that the twenty-first century would be known as the Asian Century, with the Asian sphere serving as the crucial fulcrum of international politics, and the maintenance of a peaceful and safe Asian sphere supporting both their basic interests, dominates these commonalities (Muzaffar & Khan, 2016; Ogden, 2022; Muzaffar, et. al. 2017).

Despite these considerable beneficial shared characteristics, India-China relations have a number of negative features. Their vital proximity—both geographically and in terms of political objectives—often exacerbates such conflicts. The 1962 War and the present episodes in Galwan, which resulted in losses in both states, are examples of past and recent conflicts that exacerbated the territorial disputes between Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

In a broader sense, observers see a war for hegemony, power, and influence between the two sides, which cuts through Beijing's and New Delhi's common desire for energy security and regional trade (Scott, 2008).

This self-motivation has an impact on each state's bilateral relations with other countries in the Indo-Pacific, East Asia, South East Asia, and South Asia, with the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) taking center stage. New Delhi is most concerned about China's close ties with Pakistan, while Beijing is most concerned about India's increasing ties with the United States (along with Russia, Japan, and Australia). The latter is especially essential since it pertains to the dynamics of the Asian balance of power and decides whether a state can exert hegemony and leadership over East Asia, South Asia, and the greater Asian region as a whole or is unable to do so. The fact that both regimes are accumulating increasingly potent military assets through coordinated modernization initiatives only helps to exacerbate the situation (Muzaffar & Khan, 2021; Ogden, 2022).

As a result, India-China relations can be viewed as having a growing nexus, with certain facets of their relationship perceived as having both advantages and problems at once. Given that both countries are increasing their international position and the scope of their global interests. The extent and size of those benefits and liabilities are constantly accruing in the landscape. Internationally, further realism thoughtfulness their interactions as a typical example of a security challenge, with many tactical measures taken by each side being instantly reversed by the other, always regarded as a threat to the interests of others (Pant, 2011).

Similarly, more constructivism thinking would seek to emphasize how common goals and objectives, as well as anxieties and threats, are the invention of anthropological community building, which can allow India-China relations to disengage from the security conundrum and focus on win-win outcomes (Hopf, 1998). These shared social activities and their emotional impacts, which have historical roots but are now deeply embedded in current touch, can be used to understand state alliances and rivalries (Pardesi, 2010).

Based on this, we may view security risk observation as a significant and important tool for analyzing and comprehending ties between Beijing and New Delhi. Threat perceptions, defined as the "anticipation of harm to either one's material assets or belief systems" (Baldwin, 1971), are created by previous interactions between nations and serve as the foundation for theories about how participants

might behave in specific circumstances. In this sense, ancient antagonism, disputes, and rivalries continue to produce a climate of distrust and aggression in current relationships, exacerbating stated anxieties (Singer, 1958). This is undoubtedly true of the China-India relationship, given the legacy of the 1962 War as well as previous memories of antagonism and conflict. This emphasizes how “even the potential of huge complete advantages for both countries do not provoke their collaboration so extensive as one worries how the other may utilize its greater skills” that overcoming such negativities is essential to fostering effective relationships (Waltz, 1978). In this view, the good side of the competition must win over its immoral side for supportive relations between Beijing and New Delhi to flourish. Thus, preserving a cooperation based on shared defense, political, and economic objectives will be necessary over time (Naidu, 2008).

This work takes the following approach to analyzing such dynamics utilizing these useful heuristic techniques. It begins by detailing the history of India-China relations over the last 75 years, from their establishment as contemporaneous countries in the late 1940s to the present. The paper then examines the essential features of recent New Delhi-Beijing contacts using this development as an analytical compass. Here, we specifically analyze the interactions between the two countries in light of a wide range of variables before arriving at a set of assumptions that assess the facts of convergence and divergence in China-India relations and, more importantly, address the question of whether good or bad relations are currently influential (Muzaffar & Khan, 2021; Ogden, 2022).

### **The Foundation of Historical Events**

Following similar, unfavorable colonial experiences on both sides, contemporary India emerged in 1947, and later, the People's Republic of China (PRC) emerged as modern China in 1949.

Despite their differing histories, both countries were weak and resource-poor when they originally took on their current forms. As a result, China and India faced tremendous political, social, and developmental challenges in the years immediately following WWII (Tellis, 2004). Furthermore, the actions of outside players had cost both sets of their governing leaders a significant amount of prestige, fueling long-held anti-colonial and anti-imperialist sentiments in Beijing and New Delhi. Such a similar engagement and common risk perception increased the possibility of a strong alliance between these two countries, indicating a significant dread and distrust of the international system and its creators (Sidhu & Yuan, 2003).

India was the first non-socialist country to establish ambassadorial ties with communist China on this basis during the early years of their current relationship, contradicting the Cold War's emerging bipolar politics (Ogden, 2014). Both Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai paid state visits to their respective nations in 1954. These journeys were characterized by a sense of cooperation, brotherhood, and hope (Sidhu & Yuan, 2003).

Furthermore, both governments realized that working together would allow them to better withstand the plans of foreign great powers and foster greater stability throughout Asia. Representatives from both countries commonly used the phrase "Chini-Hindi bhai bhai," which means "Chinese and Indians are brothers," to express their emotions (Fang, 2013).

Both countries are inclined to admire each other's regional integrity and sovereignty, which reflects mutual anxieties of being conquered again. This was reinforced by the principle of non-aggression, which prohibited the use of armed force in international relations, as well as the principle of non-interference in domestic affairs, which highlighted the importance of maintaining independence and

autonomy from other influences. Other values like impartiality, peaceful coexistence, and sharing advantages with equality reinforced these maxims (Ogden, 2022).

Despite initial hope and several successful agreements on sensitive issues within their shared borders. As a result, Beijing began to perceive New Delhi as a potential challenge to its status as developing-country leader, especially given India's substantial contribution to the Non-Aligned Movement. Both sides shared a worldview, as indicated by the five principles of peaceful coexistence, but this closeness also created inherent challenges in how each country might positively pursue its primary strategic goals. According to our double-edged sword metaphor, what once appeared to be agreements subsequently became problems, and vice versa (Ogden, 2022).

Chinese assaults of Ladakh in 1959 preceded the China-India War, which was largely motivated by territorial disputes with Arunachal Pradesh, Aksai Chin, and Tibet. The 1962 War damaged Nehru's hopes of domination, resulted in India's humiliating defeat in one month, and left the boundary question practically unresolved (Guha, 2012). It has left an apparent irreversible mental mark and a profound distrust of China. Furthermore, it pushed India to renounce its previous idea that it would advance in both domestic and foreign affairs, resulting in a more marked and long-term militarization of India (Garver, 2004; Huchet, 2008).

Following the 1962 defeat, India's defense spending surged dramatically as New Delhi recognized the importance of armed security concerns. In the late 1990s, the country purchased nuclear weapons (Perkovich, 2004). China's subsequent choice to form a long-term strategic alliance with Pakistan, with whom India shared South Asian territory, leadership, and status conflicts, only served to cement this approach and heighten Indian perceptions of China as a threat (Ogden 2014). The China-Pakistan relationship would comprise Beijing strengthening Pakistan's defense capabilities, aiding the Pakistani military, and providing diplomatic support in relation to the Kashmir conflict (Garver, 2004).

After a "Statement of Friendship" in May 1970, full diplomatic connections were not restored until July 1976. Slow efforts were made to normalize relations, including a joint communiqué issued in May 1980 that asked for the establishment of hotlines, in-person commander meetings, and early warning of military training in order to avoid recurring border clashes. Premier Zhao Ziyang and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi met in October 1985, and the former paid his first Indian head of state visit to China in 34 years in 1988 (Ogden, 2022).

The collaboration was expanded further with Jiang Zemin's visit to India in 1996, the first by a Chinese Premier since 1962. As a result, new measures to reduce border tensions were implemented, such as fewer perambulations and the deletion of major military arrangements. This improvement in India-China ties maintained despite a brief downturn following India's nuclear missile tests in May 1998. Premier Atal Bihari Vajpayee wrote to Bill Clinton, the president of the United States at the time, saying, "We have an overt nuclear weapon state on our border, a state that committed armed aggression against India in 1962" (Vajpayee, 1998; Ogden, 2014).

Following the visit of Indian President K. R. Narayanan in June 2000, discussions about borders, the economy, and science resumed. The signing of the "Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation" in 2003 marked the pinnacle of these positive relationships, assisting both parties in reaching an agreement on a variety of bilateral, regional, and international issues. Trade between India and China increased from \$3 billion in 2000 to \$74 billion in 2011, indicating a deepening of ties and rising levels of economic dependency. Both sides also competed for a number

of oil contracts, demonstrating their cooperative efforts to secure energy security (Ogden, 2014). Beijing and New Delhi both recognized that they needed to be acknowledged as economic superpowers on both the domestic and international levels in command to gain authority as world power (Rusko & Sasikumar, 2007).

In terms of diplomacy, the 2008 "Shared Vision for the Twenty-First Century" statement outlined a unified global economic strategy, which included coordinated action in international forums on global environmental challenges and civil nuclear energy cooperation. Furthermore, the two parties helped to establish the BRICS summit in 2009, which focused on shared goals for a more fair and multipolar world order (Cooper & Farooq, 2016). In 2012, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang stated that China-India relations were the most significant bilateral cooperation in the twenty-first century, and relations overall appeared to be in a golden age (Ogden, 2014).

### **The Shape of Modern Relationships on Economic Grounds**

India and China appear to be fully emerging or positioned to become major powers in the last ten years. Obtaining—and even reestablishing—such a position has been a long-sought ambition for both Beijing and New Delhi since the 1940s, as it is a significant energetic component of both governments' external strategy objectives. Their importance in the international system has grown and continues to grow as a result of their increasing economic strength, rising military spending, the world's largest populations, and two of the world's main governments in terms of territory. Regarding the first of these metrics, in 2020 China's gross domestic product (GDP) was \$24.27 trillion and India's was \$8.97 trillion, making them the first and third highest in the world and accounting for 18.3 percent and 6.8 percent of global GDP, respectively (World Bank, 2022). The second and third greatest military expenditures worldwide in 2020, respectively, were made by India (\$72.9 billion) and China (\$252.3 billion). As a result, China and India are becoming increasingly important to other powerful nations in the global arrangement, notably the US, whose dominant spot seems to be in jeopardy due to a quickly developing China (World Bank, 2022).

According to the main thesis, a strong economy with a global orientation confers larger components of dependency and authority within the global arrangement while simultaneously providing cautiously dominant states with structure-determining primacy. Over the last ten years, it has been commonly assumed that India and China will naturally complement one another, with the former functioning as the "back office of the world" and the latter as the "workshop of the world" (Huchet, 2008). The Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji, supported both countries as unstoppable on a global scale. As a result, notwithstanding other issues of contention between them, China-India economic relations were considered as very important underpinnings of the India-China rapprochement that happened at the close of the twentieth century (Pant, 2011).

Intra-Indian commerce between China and India reached a record \$125 billion in 2021, up 43.3% from 2020. This demonstrated the significance of the partnership, despite the protracted standoff between their two forces in Eastern Ladakh, which culminated in the Galwan conflict in 2020 (The Economic Times, 2022). Notably, since 2011, when they periodically demonstrated less-than-exponential growth, such unusual spikes have not defined economic relationships. Since 2009, China has been India's largest importer, emphasizing the extent of this dependence. China was India's major trading partner in 2020, accounting for 13.8% of total imports, ahead of the United States (7.6%). During the COVID-19 outbreak, India also relied on Chinese technology and supply, with Beijing's greater technological expertise surpassing that of New Delhi (Patranobis, 2021).



Importantly, this status does not apply to China's imports from India, resulting in significantly unequal economic connections and a \$69 billion trade deficit between the two nations in 2021 (The Economic Times, 2022). Such an imbalance calls into question broader normative ideas about shared progress and the purported "win-win" premise of such interactions, which currently benefit China more than India.

As a component of China's larger Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India has struggled to link the RCEP due to concerns that it will pass through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, theoretically undermining India's broader entitlements to the region while simultaneously enhancing Pakistan and allowing the construction of roads that could be used by militants to enter Indian territory. More crucially, they have similar underlying concerns, despite being in distinct stages of development as two governments that are now liberalizing their economies and trying to become full-fledged actors in international affairs. China and India were ranked 80th and 80th, respectively, in the "Corruption Perceptions Index 2019" by Transparency International (Transparency International, 2019). As a result of largely unchecked and inadequately managed economic liberalization policies, both states are now experiencing extensive environmental contamination.

As a result, China created 26.5 percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in 2018, while India produced 6.6 percent, placing first and third in terms of state-level emissions, respectively (Climate Watch, 2021). Air pollution killed 1.6 million people in India and China in 2017, and by 2020, India and China had 46 of the world's 100 most polluted cities, with India accounting for nine of the top ten. As a result, both governments are eager in finding answers to these problems, and they may collaborate within international frameworks while learning from one another. These exchanges counterbalance the negative effects of their intricate economic relationships (Ogden, 2022).

### **The Shape of Modern Relationships on Military Grounds**

Military investment on both sides has expanded in tandem with their respective economic prosperity. This spending has frequently been used to complement both sides' requirements for trade, energy, and territorial security. Furthermore, India views China's military modernization and growing regional aggressiveness as being closely tied to its financial liberalization and the enormous comparative advantages Beijing has over other countries (Pant & Joshi, 2015). Because of its significantly higher rates of economic growth, China has been able to expand far more than its partners, including India. There are also collaborative anti-piracy training aerobics to lessen hazards to energy and commerce security in the IOR while also supporting long-term economic growth. Initiated in 2007, their shared armed workout "Exercise Hand-in-Hand" has had eight incarnations with both countries hosting the occasion, with the most recent one being in 2019. While there is mutually beneficial overlap between both groups of interests, their territorially exclusive objectives have led to conflict. This conflict has gained more prominence in recent years as a result of India's and China's conflicting entitlements to the undecided regions of Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh.

These battles, complicated by ill-defined borders and frequent Chinese incursions, are centered on restoring each side's territorial integrity. According to New Delhi, the battle poses a greater security threat to India than to China because if Beijing gains control of Arunachal Pradesh, it will let China to push its influence beyond the Himalayas and into India's unstable north-eastern provinces (Fang, 2013). The current military standoff in Doklam in 2017 and the fatal clashes in Galwan in 2020, which emphasized an experiential factor in both parties' combined danger assessments, are examples of these risk discernments and the dispute's intrinsic zero-sum nature.

Rising tensions are being fueled by both sides' more vocal nationalist attitudes, as well as internal calls for aggressive, militarily supported responses to any perceived invasions. Further (possibly catastrophic) military engagements between the two countries are not ruled out, given India's "deep mistrust" of China (Scott, 2008). The ongoing development of both sides' militaries, including China's work on supersonic missile technology, and India's testing of a "China-centric" variant of the Agni V in late 2021, as well as the joint development of guided missile submarines and destroyers, heighten both sides' perceptions of danger. China's regional security is impacted by India's sale of armaments to the Vietnam and Philippines, while US advancements are being sparked by Beijing's developments (Scott, 2021; Yaseen, et. al. 2016).

Both countries acknowledged, during the visit of Modi to China in 2015 that their "simultaneous re-emergence... as two major powers in the region and the globe, presents a monumental opportunity for (the) realization of the Asian Century" (MEA, 2015). India's participation in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and its full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which Modi viewed as "a logical extension of India's age-old ties with the region" and "will help us build a region which is an engine of economic growth for the world and is more stable," are emblematic of these sentiments. India's relations with the SCO includes cooperative military drills, the most recent of which took place in late 2021, even though they occurred around the same time as the Quad's "Malabar 21" drills (Ogden, 2022).

### **Conclusion**

India-China relations are characterized by a complex and ever-changing ratio of interests that have converged and divided over time, as evidenced by their 75-year history of international participation. In areas focused on favorably resolving territorial conflicts, establishing unchallenged regional hegemony, and taking the helm of the Asian Century, India and China appear to be driven together by strategic overlaps in aims and interests into conflict with one another—mostly conflict precedents and prior experience. The violent clashes at Galwan in 2020 vividly highlight this sense of threat, as substantial and ongoing material gradually escalates, contributing to the intensity of both entities acquiring power.

It seems challenging to find a course of action that avoids such concurrent convergence and divergence. Particularly since the start of China's BRI, regional influence competition has increased. As a result, cooperation between the two sides on important global issues like climate change, the nature of the global trading system, sovereignty issues, and humanitarian interventions, among others, has waned. As a result of this observation, other tensions between the two giants are exacerbated, which tilts their current relationships toward the unfavorable side of the double-edged sword. However, it would necessitate compromises from both sides, which are now challenging to achieve given the sometimes nationalist-fueled hostilities between the two factions. Greater regional forces, most notably the ongoing all-weather relations between Beijing and Islamabad, and New Delhi's obvious and deepening strategic recent tilt towards Washington would also seem to partly weigh against forging such a strategic route. Such efforts become increasingly necessary and significant at an era when populism and nationalism are driving international relations, and there are two forceful and self-assured leaders in the personas of Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping.

Increased collaboration in these areas can also contribute to a stronger sense of India and China's shared interdependence, understanding, and destiny. These linkages will be helpful during times of stress and potential conflict. It would be beneficial to accept strategic complexity rather than

anticipate strategic simplicity and to keep in mind the crucial role of pragmatism in contemporary Indian foreign policy. As a result, even while it too suffers from the bad impacts of imbalanced and unequal trade with Beijing, New Delhi may profit from obtaining beneficial collaboration on issues like climate change and social governance/corruption. In addition, even though China continues to be Pakistan's strongest ally, India and China can cooperate militarily in some areas, such as the fight against cross-border wrongdoings like drug trafficking and the penetration of radical clusters. In the end, it will also support China's aspirations to become a great power and India's realization of the Asian Century individually and together.

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