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## India-China Border Issue in the Larger Geostrategic Context



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*"Our defence measure has so far been based on the calculations of a superiority over Pakistan. In our calculations we shall have to reckon with Communist China in the north and north east, a Communist China which has definite ambitions and aims and which does not, in any way, seem friendly disposed towards us"*

— Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel

In a letter written to PM Jawaharlal Nehru in 1950

### Introduction

It is widely believed that China's relations with India can be traced back to the era between 206 BC and 220 AD when Buddhism travelled to China. Thereafter, Chinese Buddhist monk Faxian (*Fa-Hien*) visited India somewhere between 399 to 412 AD during the Gupta dynasty. Another Chinese visitor Xuanzang (*Hiuen Tsang*) visited India between 629 AD and 645 AD. It is also believed that he studied in the Nalanda University under Indian Buddhist monk Silabhadra. His travelogue remains a notable source of information on 7<sup>th</sup> Century India.<sup>1</sup>

### Key Points

- India and China inherited frontiers that were either undefined as in the western Aksai Chin region, or were delimited but not demarcated as the McMahon Line in the eastern sector. China's entry into Tibet in 1950, rebellion in Tibet in 1959, and Dalai Lama's flight to India further complicated the issue and contributed to breakdown of bilateral relations.
- Economic development and GDP growth are central to China's geopolitics. Resultantly, two contradictory approaches are obvious in China's overtures towards India. The desire for friendly ties so that it can focus on growth as also contest the US, and secondly, hostility due to conflicting and competing agendas in Asia.
- It is also evident that in China's overall perspective, the threats and challenges on its Eastern Seaboard are significantly larger and more critical than the territorial issues along the LAC with India. Geopolitically, therefore, the Sino-Indian border issues may not assume criticality in the foreseeable near future.
- Global economic growth and geo-economic fortunes of the World are now intrinsically linked to the growth of India and China, which in turn necessitates greater cooperation and amity between the two countries.
- In the emerging environment therefore, India should initiate measures to reduce the misperception of India's global ambition by underscoring its benign nature and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' character of its Foreign Policy.



India's relationship with Tibet can be traced to the 8<sup>th</sup> Century when Buddhism was introduced there by two Indian monks — Shantarakshita built the first monastery in Tibet. Thereafter, as per popular belief, Padmasambhava (known as Guru Riponche in Tibet), used his wisdom to overcome 'spiritual' forces and became the main proponent of Buddhism in Tibet. India and China therefore had a long history of peaceful co-existence, which lasted until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

During World War II, both British India and China played important roles in halting the progress of Imperial Japan. While India gained independence from the British in 1947, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) assumed power in 1949 after a civil war with Chiang Kai Shek's Nationalists, who moved the seat of their Republic of China (ROC) government to Taiwan. The CCP named their new regime the People's Republic of China (PRC). The modern day relationship between India and China began in 1950 when India was amongst the first few countries to recognize PRC as the legitimate government of mainland China. In 1957, Prime Minister Nehru wrote that "it has been a proud boast of both India and China, that these two great countries often with a common border, have not had any military conflict during the last two thousand years or more of our relations. On the whole, India's expansiveness stopped at the Himalayas and our forefathers crossed the mountains or the seas, only on cultural and religious missions".<sup>2</sup> In 1959 Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai wrote a letter to Prime Minister Nehru stating that "there is a history of long standing friendship but (and) no conflict of fundamental interests between our two countries, and our Governments are initiators of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. We have no reason to allow the tension on the border between our two countries to continue".<sup>3</sup> **The India-China relation therefore had a long history of amity and friendship until the emergence of the border issue between the two countries.**

## **The Border Issue**

The border issues between India and China is perhaps the most important issue precluding full normalisation of relations between the two countries. Both sides have long recognized the entire length of approximately 3,488 km Indo-China border, excluding the 482 km long Bhutan section, by custom or by treaty. The Treaty of Tingmosgang of 1684, signed after the war between Ladakh and Tibet, was perhaps the first such treaty. The traditional boundary

was reaffirmed in 1842 by a treaty between the Dogra ruler of Kashmir on one side and the Dalai Lama of Lhasa and Emperor of China on the other. Thereafter, as per the Treaty of Amritsar of 1847, Lord Harding, the Governor General of India wrote to both Tibet and China to appoint a joint boundary commission to fix the Ladakh-Tibet border, but the Chinese replied that “the borders of those territories have been sufficiently and distinctly fixed, so that it will prove far more convenient to abstain from any measures for fixing them”.<sup>4</sup> The agreement signed in 1858 between Dewan Basti Ram on behalf of Kashmir and Mangualsale on behalf of Tibet, further confirmed the traditional boundary. **Indian maps started showing the same as the boundary and the official Chinese maps of 1893, 1917 and 1919, showed the boundary exactly as depicted in the official Indian maps.**

In the Eastern Sector, the present day Arunachal Pradesh – Tibet boundary is a natural, traditional and administrative dividing line between the two countries. Owing to the general alignment of the ‘watershed’ along this traditional line, it was considered easier to delineate and demarcate it. Accordingly, in March 1899, the first definitive boundary proposal (the Elgin Proposal) was made by British India to the Chinese, who did not acknowledge it.<sup>5</sup> In 1906, the British Indian Government sought Chinese acceptance of Indian suzerainty over Tibet, which was rejected by China, who insisted on China’s control over Tibet. Thereafter in 1913 – 1914, in the Shimla Convention, the territories of Tibet were attempted to be divided into ‘Outer Tibet’ where Chinese suzerainty over Tibetan Government will prevail, and an ‘Inner Tibet’ which will be in the jurisdiction of Tibetan Govt. **The Shimla Convention also defined the boundary between Tibet and China as well as between Tibet and India (McMahon Line). A draft convention was initiated by all three countries on 27 April 1914, but the Chinese rejected it. A modified convention was signed between British India and Tibet thereafter on 3 July 1914.**

In 1940-50, both countries inherited frontiers that were either undefined as in the western Aksai Chin region, or were delimited but not demarcated as the McMahon Line in the eastern sector. In itself, this was not adequate enough reason for an irreconcilable disagreement and conflict. What complicated and shaped the context of each side’s approach to their inherited borders was China’s entry into Tibet in 1950. Even this major geopolitical development, reversing a retreat from the area since the collapse of the Qing dynasty in 1911, was accepted by India. **However, by the late 1950s, India’s foreign**



policy debates had become polarised. One group led by Prime Minister Nehru favoured non-alignment, resisting Pakistan and avoiding conflict with China, and, another called for an entente with the West and a more robust policy vis a vis China.<sup>6</sup> Sardar Patel was however always concerned about the Chinese designs and maintained that India will have to cater for an antagonistic and unfriendly China which was not friendly disposed towards India.<sup>7</sup>

The 1954 India- China agreement over Tibet should have settled matters at least from China's side, as it had now attained national unification over all its outlying regions. From India's perspective, even though the territorial status quo lacked legal sanctity, there was no reason for further conflict. In fact, the extension of India's administration over Tawang in 1951, an operation scarcely noticed in Beijing, and reaffirmation of special ties with Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim suggested a reasonable geopolitical position for India in the sub-Himalayan region. Yet, the turn of 1950s, especially **after the rebellion in Tibet in 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama, saw a breakdown of bilateral relations between India and China. The main factor being China's failure to secure stability and integration of Tibet with PRC.**

Initial negotiations on the border issue proved unfruitful and both sides felt it impossible to find a common ground. What happened inside Tibet played a visible role in aggravating China's strained relations with India. Many in China believed that India attempted to inherit British geopolitical projections, regarding Tibet. Shortly after the abortive uprising in Tibet, India granted asylum to Dalai Lama in 1959, which many believe to be the catalyst for Beijing's troubled relations with India. Relations thereafter have however been characterized by border disputes, resulting in conflicts. **The Sino-Indian war in 1962, the standoff in Sumdorong Chu (1987), Doklam (2017) and Galwan (2020) along with other issues arising on the borders contributed to strained relations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Despite above, both countries have maintained diplomatic and economic ties, and today China is one of India's largest trading partner.**

The grievance in both India and China mounted as a result of the border war and, until the 1980s, Sino-Indian relations were at a low ebb. Following a long suspension of interaction, 1979 and 1981 saw an exchange of visits by the two countries foreign ministers. The low



profile dialogue on the border issue resumed and the diplomatic missions in New Delhi and Beijing took to their normal business once again. Shortly after India granted statehood to Arunachal Pradesh, another border crisis appeared precipitating. While, relations at the political level, remained stagnant during this period, the border situation appeared to fester owing essentially to the differing perceptions of the LAC and interpretation of the alignment of the McMahon Line. **The Sumdorong Chu incident in the Kameng Sector in Arunachal Pradesh in 1986-87 brought to fore the border issue again and Indo – China relations were again strained.**

The deteriorating bilateral relations were again attempted to be stabilized by both sides. On the invitation of the Chinese Premier, Li Peng, Shri Rajiv Gandhi visited China in December 1988. The two sides emphasized on the five principles of peaceful coexistence, *Panchsheel*, as the fundamental principle for guiding the state to state relations between the two countries and the establishment of a new international political and economic order. The two sides agreed to restore, improve and develop good neighbourly relations. India also agreed that Tibet is an autonomous region of China and the Tibetans living in India will not be allowed to indulge in anti – China activities. **After the apex level visit in 1988, both sides agreed to shelve the border issue before finalizing a mutually acceptable solution. It was agreed to normalize relationship by multiplying bilateral engagements in a larger context, beyond the border issue.**<sup>8</sup>

Based on above agreements, numerous bilateral agreements were signed between the two countries. These were aimed at ushering in peace and stability along the borders between India and China as also institutionalising the methodology of patrolling and other activities by two sides along the LAC. The five agreements pertaining to the border issue included the Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement of 1993, the Agreement on Confidence Building Measures of 1996, the Protocol for the Implementation of Military Confidence Building Measures of 2005, the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs of 2012 and the Border Defence Cooperation Agreement of 2013. **While these agreements did usher in a period of relative peace and stability on the borders, the claims and counterclaims by both sides continued which in turn resulted in numerous standoffs and issues along the LAC.**



Despite the agreements between the two countries from 1993 to 2013, and a robust bilateral trade, there has been little progress in resolving the differing perception of the Line of Actual Control and the Border between India and Tibet. The Doklam incident of 2017 and the Galwan incident of 2020, were flash points. India's robust and measured response ensured the sanctity of the LAC and frustrated Chinese designs. However, despite the issues arising along the borders, it is assessed that India-China relations were sufficiently stable with robust economic content, and both sides appreciated the need to insulate their growing ties of trade and investment from such incidents along the LAC. **In the present context, the likelihood of India-China tensions and disputes persevering for long is not very high.**

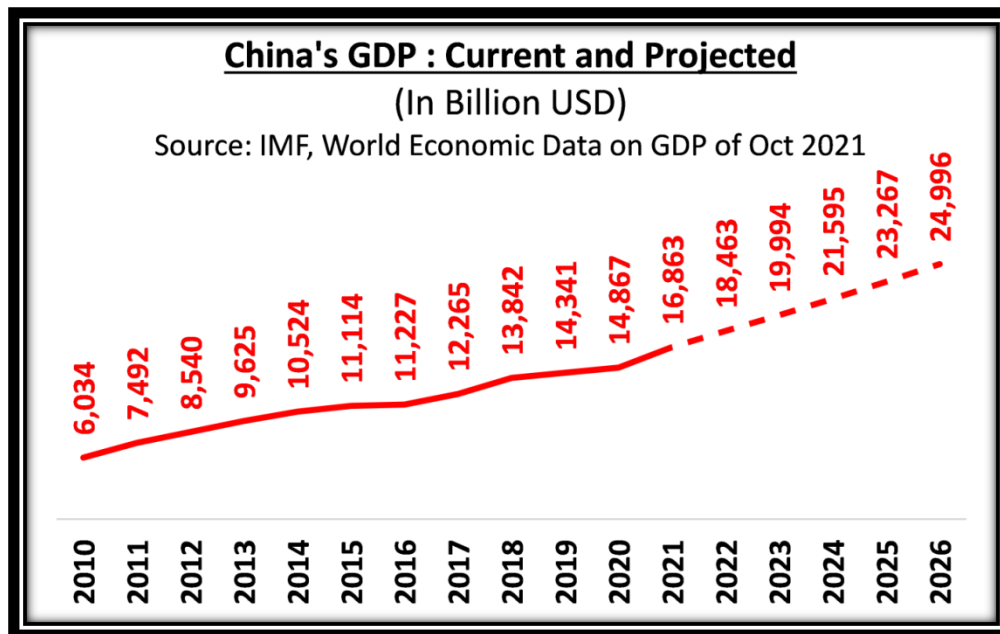
It is generally recognised that the larger geo- political and geo- economic advantages of cooperation and stability far outweighs any tactical or territorial advantage which may be accrued along the borders through confrontation and conflict. The context of the Chinese hydrocarbon sensitivities in the Indian Ocean and relative disadvantage it has along the Sea Lanes of Communication, has also perhaps contributed to the People's Liberation Army (PLA) avoiding any precipitous military action along the land borders. Consequently, along the land borders, while PLA's jockeying for tactical advantage may continue for some time, it is fair to assume that they will abide by the deliberately negotiated terms of their disengagement in 2020 and 2021. The LAC situation has consequently remained stable and peaceful after the Galwan incident in 2020. **Notwithstanding the emerging environment of stability and understanding, and while the two sides remain committed to negotiations and settling issues arising through dialogue, both sides also remain cognisant of the security situation that may arise with propensity to precipitate conflict.**

### **The Larger Geo-Strategic Context**

From its humble beginnings in the 1950s, China today has the world's second largest economy when measured by nominal GDP and the largest, when measured by the Purchasing Power Parity format. The CCP prioritises economic development as the 'central task' and the force that drives China's modernisation, including of the PLA.<sup>9</sup> It is believed that China contributes more than 18% to the World GDP, which is likely to increase further.



Graph 1: China's GDP: Current and Projected



Source: IMF World Economic Data on GDP (October 2021)

It recently overtook the European economy in 2021. Numerous economic forecasts indicate that China will become the world's largest economy in nominal GDP terms before 2030. To sustain the growth momentum, Communist China has modified and changed its original communist policies and now pursues a market-oriented economy, sustained through a large manufacturing base and state owned enterprises. China needs to persevere with its growth and developmental goals to ensure a stable internal situation as also pursue its Global leadership objectives. Their economic capabilities have enabled China to indulge in mega projects in Africa, Eurasia, CARs, South Asia and in the South East Asia, which in turn has enlarged Chinese geostrategic reach significantly. **China has utilised its growing economic stature to enhance its geostrategic power.**

In the current geostrategic environment therefore, the geo-political aspirations of China are largely a function of its geo-economics. The Sea Lanes of Communication through the India Ocean and the Strait of Malacca, are critical for China to ensure its fuel and energy sufficiency. Security of these areas are important for China to sustain its GDP growth. Regional political aspirations and security concerns of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan,

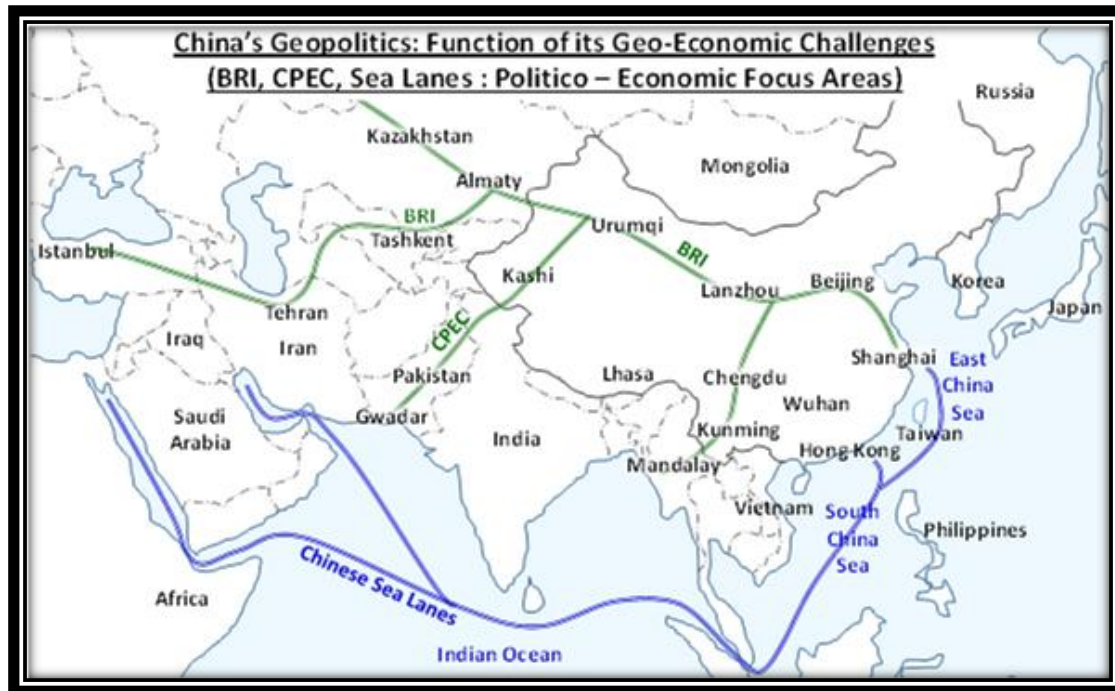


Philippines and Vietnam also have a direct bearing on the geopolitical aspirations of China. Managing the political aspirations of Hong Kong has become particularly important for China. Controlling protests in Hong Kong politically is a clear indication of priority to stability for economic growth, even at the cost of political ideology. Taiwan is emerging as the main concern for China on its Eastern Sea Board. Despite perceived provocations by US in recent times, China has not precipitated any situation which may constrain its economic growth and trade. **Economic development and GDP growth needs have therefore acquired primacy of place in China's geo-political overtures.**

One of the largest geo-economic venture initiated by China is the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) in large number of countries. China's BRI connecting the manufacturing bases of China along its Eastern Sea Board with the energy rich West Asia, the markets in CAR and Eurasia along with similar initiatives in Pakistan and Myanmar perhaps have twin purpose of enhancing the scope of its economic growth as also balance out challenges it faces from US. China has perhaps undertaken these massive infrastructure projects contextualizing security in the economic domain. Security of its restive Uighur areas in the Xinjiang province is well served by making them partners and stake holders in the BRI and CPEC projects undertaken through these areas. Similarly, collaborative economic development through BRI projects in Pakistan (CPEC), Iran, Turkey, etc, also contributes to enhanced geo- political reach with positive impact on China's security. **The BRI projects therefore appear to be clear manifestations of economic issues subsuming the security challenges in the region.**



### Map 1: China's Geopolitics



*Source: Annotated by the Author*

USA's exertions in challenging China's claim over Taiwan and the islands in the East and South China Seas are also directly related to China's aspirations for greater control of the natural resources in these areas. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) of India, USA, Japan and Australia is therefore of immense significance to China. Hedging the security concerns emanating from the counter claims by Japan, Vietnam, Philippines and Taiwan are acquiring centre stage in China's geo-political aspirations. The rationale for BRI and CPEC also includes the alternatives to China's dependence on traditional Sea Lanes of Communication for its critical energy needs, which are increasingly being contested by USA and other regional powers, including India. **China's security concerns and its geopolitical objectives are therefore increasingly becoming a function of stability of its global supply avenues through the Indian Ocean, the South and East China Seas including politico – security control over the Eastern periphery of the country bordering its Eastern Sea Board.**



At the regional level, apart for the border issue, the Afghanistan, Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and the economic contest with India will remain significant. China's traditional interest in Afghanistan had a pronounced economic content. However, after the US withdrawal in August 2021 and formation of the Taliban Government, China has not overtly indicated any politico-security interest in Afghanistan. Owing to the historical legacy of strife and conflict in Afghanistan, countries willing to invest in Afghanistan, in the near future, are likely to be few. Notwithstanding the present state, if and when the situation becomes conducive for economic activity, China is likely to prioritize economy over politics and proactively invest in the strife torn country, despite the politico-security complexion of the Afghan tangle. **Since, India has also invested significantly in Afghanistan and is likely to persevere in improving its ties with the country, there is scope for competition as also congruence, in the India-China economic and developmental energies in Afghanistan, in the future.**

Evolution of China's position on J&K suggests that its economic interests in the larger geo-economic domain, have dampened historical viewpoints and traditional geopolitical compulsions. China withdrew its support for a UN plebiscite which in effect amounted to implicit endorsement of India's position. In July 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement, by which India returned all Pakistani prisoners of war and the two countries decided to "settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations". India accordingly maintains that post Shimla Agreement, J&K is a bilateral issue between the two countries and consequently, the 1948 UN resolution on J&K is no longer applicable. This has not been overtly contested by China. On abrogation of Article 370 and 35A of the Indian Constitution, Chinese objections were muted and confined to the Ladakh region. **China has therefore moderated its stand on J&K and has stopped proactively supporting 'self-determination' or 'UN Resolutions'. During the Kargil conflict in 1999, China remained neutral and did not support Pakistan.**<sup>10</sup>

Notwithstanding above, there are issues of concern for India. India's Nuclear Supplier's Group membership, UNSC designating Pakistan's terrorists, CPEC projects in Kashmir (PoK) etc., are some such issues. Doklam standoff in 2017 and the Galwan incident in 2020 were watershed incidents and although both sides refrained from use of violent military force, India's assertiveness forced China to reassess India's strategic capability. This reassessment challenged much of the previous bias that perhaps coloured China's



judgement, including the simplistic view of India's less than equal status. Contextually, China doesn't appear to be ready for conflict with India over the border issue. Even if China attempts containing India through a conflict, the payoff would remain minimal because it wouldn't address China's key external security challenges on its East. **Presently therefore, China's policy towards India is pulled in two opposite directions – between perhaps a genuine desire for friendly ties with India so that it can focus on economy as also on US and the Pacific, and an equally genuine hostility due to conflicting and competing agendas in Asia.**<sup>11</sup>

In response to Chinese overtures in the larger economic domain, the affected countries i.e. US, Japan, Australia, India and ASEAN countries have also initiated numerous measures. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity (IPEF), the May 2022 US initiative with thirteen other countries in the Indo – Pacific Region, is one such step and is perhaps a recognition of superiority of economic leverages to counter security challenges posed by China's geopolitical and geo-economic overtures in the region. Despite US led numerous security initiatives like Quad and US Pivot in the East and South East China seas to contest Chinese territorial claims in the region, the impact of the same on China has been limited. China continues to be proactive and belligerent in pursuing its Taiwan aspiration. China also continues to scuttle any diplomatic overture aimed at maintaining status quo and thereby continues to pursue its non-substantiated and perhaps illegal territorial claims, which have the potential of accruing for China a disproportionate economic advantage over other Global players, including India. The 13 member US led **Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity of 2022 has the potential to contest China in the economic domains more comprehensively with apposite leverages in the security domain. China's geopolitics is accordingly also shaped by the contests and challenges it faces in pursuing such initiatives by its rivals.**

The Quad initiative by US, India, Australia and Japan is aimed to counter Chinese belligerence beyond its Eastern Sea Board. The Quad Summit in May 2022 committed USD 50 billion for sustainable infrastructure in the Indo-Pacific region. To counter large scale illegal fishing by the Chinese in areas beyond their traditional control, which also essentially is aimed at establishing its territorial and maritime rights over these territories, is also planned to be contested through a Maritime Domain Awareness Surveillance Initiative<sup>12</sup>

under Quad. The areas bounded by the so called 'nine dash line' has also had no takers in the region. A multi-pronged initiative is therefore underway to check China in its designs to expand its territorial control well beyond its recognised line of islands. There is great divergence in the claims of China and the counter claims of South East Asian Countries, especially Vietnam and Philippines. There are numerous contradictions in China's claims in the East China Sea and Japan does not appear to be yielding on the issue. The areas under claims and counter claims have a vast economic connotation in terms of oil and fisheries in addition to significantly enhanced territorial reach by China. China therefore has to contend with protracted opposition to its maritime claims in the East. **It is therefore evident that in China's overall perspective, the threats and challenges on its Eastern Seaboard are significantly larger and more critical than the territorial issues along the LAC with India. Geopolitically, therefore, the Sino-Indian border issues may not assume criticality in the foreseeable near future.**

### **Way Ahead for India**

Over the past decade, as India and China made steady progress in their respective economic development, their relations have been steadily declining. There is perhaps some misperceptions in the fields of geo-strategy, geoeconomics, foreign policy objectives and most importantly, the security related objectives, resulting in a measure of distrust and apprehensions. The fundamental misperception is the inability to comprehend each other's international ambitions, yielding to the fear that their foreign policies are targeted at each other. China's collusion with Pakistan and India's apparent 'closing up' with the US and the West did not help in allaying these misapprehension. Since, India is now growing faster than China and India's interactions with the US and the West is on the increase, it is India which will need to initiate measures to allay mispalced apprehensions. India will need to transparently and proactively articulate its benign and inclusive growth objectives as also more vigorously propound its geostrategic aims which is inclusive of China's growth aspirations. **India must therefore take measures to reduce the misperception of India's global ambition by underscoring its benign nature and 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' character of India's foreign policy.**

While China will remain a ‘competitor’ in the long term, the benefits of ‘cooperation’ has also been recognised by both sides. The essential dilemma in pursuing a path of economic cooperation, while concurrently pursuing a path of competition in the security domain will therefore remain a major challenge for India, despite the potency of China-Pakistan collusion eroding substantially. The benefits of shared peace, shared growth, and cooperative format of economic development and geopolitics needs to be publicised and proliferated at the global levels. **India’s China strategy has to therefore strike a careful balance between cooperation and competition as also between the economic and politico-security interests.** Given the current and future asymmetries in capabilities and influence between India and China, it is perhaps the single most important challenge for Indian strategy in the years ahead.<sup>13</sup>

In the emerging globalised milieu, there is growing recognition of ‘space adequacy’ for both India and China in the geo-strategic domain. India and China, both have large domestic markets, but the two have quite different industrialisation structures, leaving significant potential for the two sides to boost each other's development through cooperation and trade. Besides the collaborative economic growth potential, the BRICS format also offers a framework for the two countries to join hands in various areas.

**Graph 2: Growth Projections of India and China**



Source: IMF World Economic Outlook (April 2022)

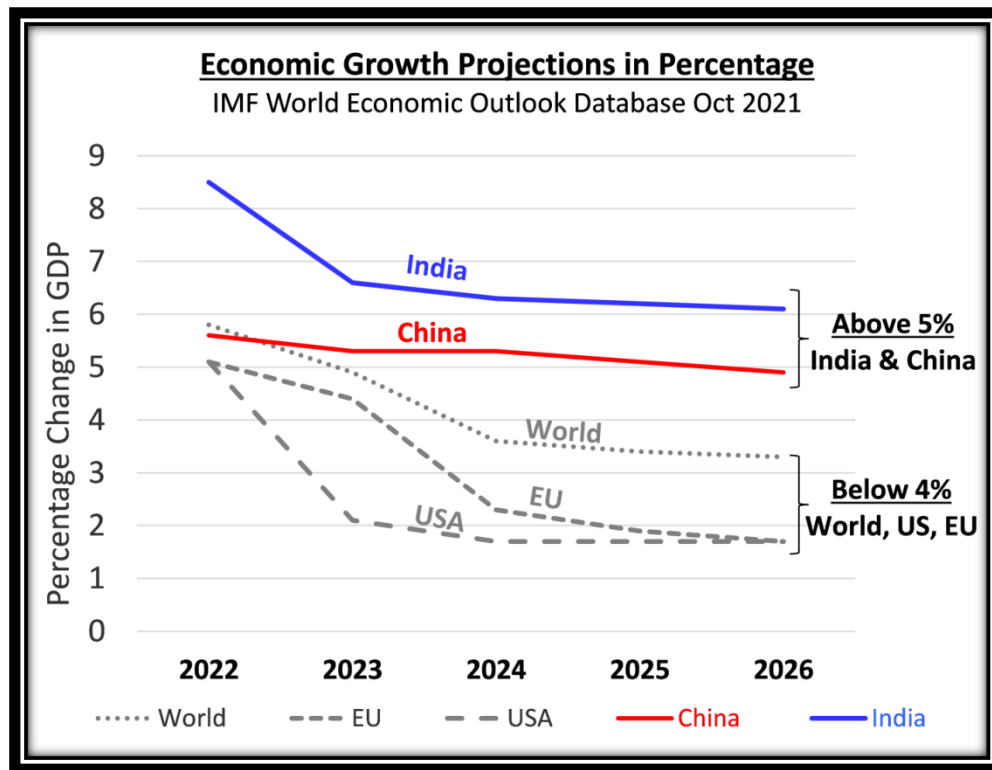


Compared to building a new industrial chain centering Quad members, better integrating into the well-developed regional industrial chain is clearly a more practical path for India. Further improvement in relations with China will be a function of growth in economic, industrial and market interdependence sphere as well as politico-security stability. India needs to now look beyond the asymmetric equations presently obtaining between India and China. India figures in all the three major strategic outlays of China, i.e. global power diplomacy, neighbourhood diplomacy and the developing country diplomacy. **India needs to leverage the strategic stature it has acquired in China's growth, its foreign policies and development strategies, and utilise it to shape China's behaviour in its favour for a shared growth environment.**

Consequently, in the coming decades, China and India will exercise increasing influence in global affairs. As prominent members of G-20, their influence will manifest in the global politics, and in the global security environment as well. Each country's role on the world stage will also be affected by the progress that it makes and by the competition and cooperation that develop between them. **Prospects of India pursuing policies that will enhance its competitive position vis-a-vis China are better than the reverse prospects.**

This is owing to greater degree of economic freedom as also an environment which is more conducive to entrepreneurial and inventive activity in India, as compared to China. The sustainability of an open and transparent system, as existing in India, is better in the long term than a 'closed' and state controlled system prevailing in China. Also, India will have more favourable demographics than China, but whether it is able to reap a demographic dividend will depend on successful implementation of an ambitious economic development agenda.<sup>14</sup>

Resultantly, India and China, with their GDP size already competing with the developed economies, are fast emerging as the major economic players in the world. In the post Covid environment, the growth projections of the traditional developed economies US and EU are significantly lower than that of the emerging economies India and China. With the Global chains getting further impacted owing to the Ukraine conflict in Europe and the variety of sanctions imposed by the 'West', the EU and US predominant supply chains will get further eroded in scope and dimension.

**Graph 3: Economic Growth Projection: India and China**

Source: IMF World Economic Outlook Database (October 2021)

Sanctions imposed on Russia will also adversely impact the EU economies to a large extent, especially in the energy sector, which in turn may also impact their manufacturing sector. While China has already invested in reasserting their importance and stature in the Global merchandise trade and supply chains, India has to quickly ramp up its growth, especially in the manufacturing sector to emerge as an important player in this very critical geostrategic domain. The manufacturing sector growth in India post the pandemic has been encouraging. The geo-economic shift from 'West to East' is therefore clearly evident not only in the geo-economic domain but also in the geostrategic domain. The manner in which both India and China resisted the pressures of the 'West' in condemning Russia for the Ukraine conflict, is a case in point. **The Global economic growth and the geo-economic fortunes of the World are now intrinsically linked to the growth of China and India, which in turn necessitates greater cooperation and amity between the two countries.**





Despite an impressive economic growth and improved security capabilities of India, China still possess an advantageous status. Coping with asymmetry, in all its dimensions, is the principal exigency for India in the India-China context. India will need to improve capabilities in the security and economic domain to reduce the asymmetry with China, which has chances of escalating apprehensions. While a measure of constraint is inherent in the existing state of asymmetry with China, India should pursue capability enhancement concurrent to exertions at improving relations. There is a degree of stability associated with the present state of asymmetry which should be utilised to enhance capabilities, rather than indulge in 'contest' with (only) 'sub-competitive' capabilities. Peace and stability in India-China relations is accordingly equally or even more important to China than any antiquated notion of military dominance or support to Pakistan. **Issues of congruence and cooperation should accordingly be proactively pursued and enlarged for improving bilateral relations, without restricting capability development measures in the security domain.**

In summation and in context of India and China emerging as the global leaders driving the world economy, is the sustainability of the envisaged economic growth of these two countries. The propensity of growth is higher in a collaborative format rather than a competitive or a confrontation format. The historical border issue, while important in the present times, is relatively less significant in the larger geostrategic and geo-economic compulsions of the two countries. Consequently, the most rationale and pragmatic course of action for both India and China is to invest significantly in a collaborative format of geopolitics and geo strategy. The early signs of such collaboration are already visible when both countries take a similar stand in international trade, global warming and related issues in international forums despite traditional security issues persevering between the two countries. **The interlinkage and inter dependence paradigm now emerging in the global economic model, especially in the manufacturing sector and markets, necessitates further strengthening of this model by India and China rather than sacrificing it on the altar of traditional security compulsions and beliefs.**



## End Notes

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