



Reality of China-India Strategic Partnership

Dr. Sumer Singh

Extension Lecturer in Defence Studies Govt. College Meham, (HR.)

Abstract:

In assessing the restructured strategic dialogue between India and China, the key question is: What does a strategic relationship between the two countries look like? What are its driving factors and core objectives? On paper, India and China have had a strategic partnership—specifically, a strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity. But scratch the surface of that agreement's rhetoric and diplomatic language and this much becomes apparent: There are, as of now, no true areas of strategic convergence. This paper includes the reasons behind the currents of obstacles. Paper also discuss that china India relations seems, "neither harmonious like nor strategic.

Keywords: Strategic Partnership, Harmonious, Convergence, Diplomatic.

Reality of Sino- Indian Strategic Partnership:

Strategic" implies existence of wide-ranging strategic convergences on overall security and stability and "Partnership" implies that both China and India by joint and shared

endeavours would work effectively towards the foregoing objective. Sadly and regrettably that does not exist currently in China- India relations, leave aside what to say about the so-called China-India Strategic Partnership.

What hovers ominously as an overhang over China-India relations is whatever you want to call it: "Cold Peace" or "Cold War"

If layers of flowery rhetoric by Chinese and Indian leaders and a slew of Boundary Agreements espousing tranquillity on the borders and conflict control mechanisms are peeled off like onion peels what stares China and India starkly in their faces is that "intense strategic distrust" is the defining characteristic of the so-called and meaningless China-India Strategic Partnership.

This strategic reality must not be lost sight of and factored-in when PM Narendra Modi and his advisers sit down in the Great Hall in Beijing for confabulations with the Chinese leaders and groping to find "out of the box" solutions to break the impasse in the normalisation of uneasy China-India relations of the last six decades.



The strategic reality is that no ‘orbital leap’ nor ‘out of the box’ solutions are possible due to China’s continued rigidity and mind-set that perceive India as not a ‘strategic co-equal’ of China and therefore adoption of Chinese postures signifying that India has no option but to acquiesce to China’s dictates camouflaged as normalisation proposals.

The strategic reality however is otherwise. Pointed in one of my SAAG Papers last year was that currently “China is Strategically Cornered” and therefore a “Window of Opportunity” exists for India to drive home to China’s leaders that India is not without strategic options.

China if it really wants to invest in a meaningful and long-range Strategic Partnership with India in the true sense has then to embark on the path of seeking “strategic convergences” with India and dilute the “strategic divergences” that mark China’s postures and formulations in South Asia and Indo Pacific.

China needs to realise that China’s policy of containment of India and restrict it to South Asian confines has failed. China must also remember that India has not indulged in any containment policies against China. What India has done in a political and strategic reach-out to

the United States was at best an effort to enlist a countervailing power against the China Threat.

Indian political leaders may keep repeating that there is no China Threat or underplaying the China Threat. The reality is however different.

In Indian public opinion what stands etched sharply in the Indian psyche is that China with its perfidious attack in 1962 “Stabbed India in the Back” and that “China Victimised India” just to “Teach India a Lesson” and to project in Asian capitals that “China is the Sole Dominant Power in Asia.”

China has a hard and difficult task to disabuse the Indian psyche of this mind-set and until China comes out with some strategically magnanimous initiatives, China-India relations are foredoomed to existing stalemate.

In addition to this the current scenario is sifting slowly in a mysterious phase.

The bilateral focus has largely been on the settlement of the boundary question, followed by the strengthening of economic and trade ties. This was carried through into the 2013 vision for the future development of the India-China strategic and cooperative partnership, signed during Premier Li Keqiang’s India trip. It was only somewhat expanded in 2015 during Prime



Minister Narendra Modi's visit to China. Notably, the joint statement issued in the latter case outlines how and where the two countries seek to coordinate their positions and work together to shape the "regional and global agenda and outcomes".

China's reaction to the 2007 Lal Masjid siege showed that when its interests are threatened, it has no compunctions about publicly exerting pressure on Pakistan. Little wonder that it is again believed to be pressuring the Pakistani establishment to crack down on terror groups, if behind the scenes this time. Reportedly, Pakistan's new spy chief visited China soon after he took office so as to allay Beijing's concerns. Weeks later, the Chinese state commissioner for counter-terrorism visited Pakistan to review the security of the Cpec project. Incidentally, the latter visit came days after Pakistan placed Hafiz Saeed under house arrest—supposedly under American and Chinese pressure.

Still, the question from New Delhi's perspective is whether such a crackdown would extend to anti-India groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed. The answer is in the negative. As of now, China has no strategic rationale to push for a crackdown on these groups. It could, hypothetically, find itself compelled to pressure Pakistan here too if these

groups create trouble on a scale that threatens regional stability—something on the 26/11 scale, for instance. This would, again, threaten its economic interests. But this is hypothetical at best—thin gruel indeed.

Similarly, the practical significance of the strategic dialogue is also evident. The new periphery strategies of both countries - China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative and India's Indo-Pacific strategy - to some extent, have caused discomfort to each other. In addition, the new security dynamics in the Indo-Pacific region also bring some uncertainties and challenges to China-India strategic relations. It was important, therefore, for both countries to reopen dialogue and discuss how to avoid strategic misunderstanding.

The dialogue attracted considerable attention in various communities in the two countries, including the media. Unfortunately, it seemed that the dialogue was very hard to conduct from a practical point of view. In fact, some Indian analysts have started to complain about the results and expressed disappointment that the dialogue did not address a series of issues that have troubled Sino-Indian relations as they stand today. Similarly, Chinese experts argue that the two countries should use the mechanism to push



forward greater strategic convergence rather than get entangled in strategic differences.

The difference in strategic mindsets played an important role in the conduct and results of this round of the Sino-Indian strategic dialogue. Both countries represent ‘oriental’ cultures; however, China and India “think differently.” China’s strategic mindset is more dialectical, synthetic, and also focused on long-term strategic planning. It is quite different from the Indian mindset, which is more abstract, exceptionalism-driven, and in favour of pursuing practical solutions at the tactical level. China and India bring their differing priorities shaped by these different styles of thinking or approaches to the negotiating table.

The Indian side preferred to bring up sensitive issues like India’s membership in the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group (NSG), getting the UN to impose sanctions on Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) chief Masood Azhar, among others. It appeared that India preferred to solve current problems and differences before pushing the bilateral strategic relations forward.

The Chinese prefer to understand bilateral ties through a big-picture analysis. Fu Ying, a Chinese

diplomat, pointed out that, “the two sides should see trees, but also the forest.” Although Beijing was looking to narrow strategic differences through the dialogue, it also was inclined to discuss strategic convergence, including prospects of promoting regional cooperation. Beijing hoped to create a friendly atmosphere for bilateral ties. Contrary to Indian thinking, the Chinese are looking at establishing friendly bilateral relations before addressing specific issues between the two countries.

Admittedly, this is not the first strategic dialogue between China and India and both sides seemed to be highly attuned to each other’s way of thinking. Not just that - the maladjustment, to some extent, also made them uncomfortable. Delhi was obviously disappointed that China disregarded its demands on solving some sensitive issues. Although Beijing tried to address Indian concerns – for instance, a delegate who was an expert on nuclear issues had joined the dialogue on the Chinese side - the Chinese were not comfortable with the Indian over-emphasis on differences between the two sides rather than focusing on the convergences. Beijing does not want to allow these differences to cloud the overall relationship.



Perhaps it is necessary that the Chinese and Indian sides unstudy each other's strategic mindset more closely. This also includes a better understanding of the other's strategic culture. The conduct of the latest strategic dialogue has shown that a more open and creative attitude is the only way to have a successful Sino-Indian dialogue.

References

1. Shaikh, Mohammed Uzair (15 July 2017). "No Room For Negotiations on Doklam, India Will Face 'Embarrassment' if Troops Not Withdrawn: Chinese State Media". India.com. Archived from the original on 15 July 2017. Retrieved 16 July 2017.
2. Backus, Maria. Ancient China. Lorenz Educational Press, 2002. ISBN 978-0-7877-0557-2.
3. Janin, Hunt. The India-China opium trade in the nineteenth century. McFarland, 1999. ISBN 978-0-7864-0715-6.
4. Tansen Sen (January 2003). Buddhism, Diplomacy, and Trade: The Realignment of Sino-Indian Relations, 600-1400. University of Hawaii Press. ISBN 978-0-8248-2593-5.
5. Williams, Barbara. World War Two. Twenty-First Century Books, 2004. ISBN 978-0-8225-0138-1.
6. "http://www.apcss.org/core/BIOS/malik/India-China_Relations.pdf" (PDF). External link in |title= (help)^[permanent dead link]
7. Lancaster, John (12 April 2005). "India, China Hoping to 'Reshape the World Order' Together". The Washington Post. Archived from the original on 9 February 2011.
8. "Why Indo-China ties will be more favourable than Sino-Pak". Theworldreporter.com. 7 July 2010. Archived from the original on 19 October 2010.
9. India-China trade surpasses target, The Hindu, 27 January 2011.
10. Jeff M. Smith today's Wall Street Journal Asia (24 June 2009). "The China-India Border Brawl". WSJ. Retrieved 16 May 2016.
11. AK Antony admits China incursion Archived 30 September 2011 at the Wayback Machine., DNA, 28 September 2011.
12. "China-Pakistan military links upset India". Financial Times. Retrieved 16 May 2016.
13. China warns India on South China Sea exploration projects Archived 24 September 2011 at the Wayback Machine., The Hindu, 15 September 2011.
14. "US, China woo India for control over Asia-Pacific". The Times Of India. 7 June 2012.
15. Goswami, Ranjit (4 May 2015). "PM Modi's China Visit: Cooperate for Development, Not Contain; and Not Both". SSRN. SSRN 2602123 .
16. "India-China bilateral trade set to hit \$100 billion by 2015 - The Times of India". The Times of India. 21 June 2012. Archived from the original on 24 June 2012. Retrieved 3 August 2012.