

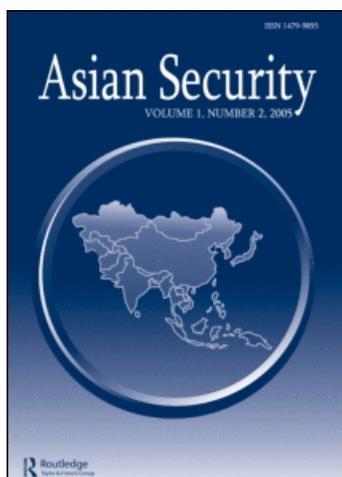
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## Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century

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# Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century

DAVID SCOTT

**Abstract:** *This article considers various security predicaments affecting relations between India and China. These Sino-Indian security predicaments include their territorial dispute, their nuclear arms race, their encirclement and alignment scenarios, their trade and energy issues, and their future prospects. International relations (IR) theory is deployed around these varied security predicaments, with power and perception particularly evident in IR realism, geopolitics, constructivism, and security dilemma dynamics. Balance-of-power theory is complemented by balance-of-threat considerations. India's hedging strategy towards China and China's own strategy of transition point to each country looking to their own respective rise for the mid century.*

## Introduction

This article looks at the relationship between India and China, a relationship that is increasingly significant for Asia's security dynamics and balance of power. It does this through considering relevant international relations (IR) theory and analyzing Sino-Indian practice. In terms of theory, power and perceptions are very evident factors in Sino-Indian relations, reflecting *classical realism* as well as elements of *constructivism*. In terms of practice, the article looks at territorial, nuclear, encirclement, trade and energy, as well as future issues between the two countries. It argues that their relationship remains more competitive than cooperative, despite much of the official rhetoric.

A starting point for this is the *Shared Vision for the 21st Century*, drawn up as the pinnacle of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's official visit to China in January 2008, in which both governments affirm that "the two sides believe that their bilateral relationship in this century will be of significant regional and global influence."<sup>1</sup> China's official media was quick to emphasize that both countries "share a vision of accelerating relations," in this "milestone for relations between the two countries."<sup>2</sup> Chinese scholars were "upbeat" about the future of Sino-Indian ties.<sup>3</sup> On the day of its signing, one Chinese scholar, Hu Shishang was writing "the rise of the world's two most populous nations is of a revolutionary significance," whilst hoping that Sino-Indian relations should "overstep the limits of geopolitics" and "should especially exceed the security predicaments and grudges against each other in history."<sup>4</sup>

What becomes apparent in Sino-Indian "security predicaments" is how past grudges are entwined by other considerations in the twenty-first century, in which "mutual suspicion continues to permeate the Sino-Indian relationship."<sup>5</sup> The border

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issue, outstanding between the two countries for around half a century, is overlaid by a nuclear arms race, respective needs over maritime security in the Indian Ocean, and energy competition. Their bilateral relationship is also overlaid with their other wider relationship; in the case of India the strategic calculations behind India's increasing ties with the United States and Japan, which indeed suit the needs of all three countries to soft-balance and hedge against a rising China. In turn, China's concerns over a rising India go together with attempts to dissuade India from too close an alignment with the US and Japan against China. Into these settings have come mutual perceptions of encirclement by each other. However, before looking at Sino-Indian relations in practice, one can consider what IR theory might hold for interpreting and understanding the behavior of these two large Asian states toward each other.

### International Relations Theory and Sino-Indian Relations

Power and perceptions seem to be particularly powerful factors in their relationship. Hard-headed IR classical realism and its bedfellow geopolitics remain of clear importance for current Sino-Indian relations; replete as the Sino-Indian relationship is with competition and *balance of power* calculations in and around their respective neighborhoods, which reflect their particular "Great Power 'Great Game'" vis-à-vis each other.<sup>6</sup> As Dutta noted in 1998, "China and India straddle a common geopolitical space across the Himalayas and South, Southwest, and Southeast Asia. This makes for strategic and geopolitical competition."<sup>7</sup> However, classical realism and geopolitics do not provide the whole picture. Both need adjusting in the face of actual processes operating in Sino-Indian relations. An adjusted realism-geopolitics is proposed for this study of Sino-Indian relations. The adjustment is with three regards. Firstly, Walt's *balance-of-threat* framework tempers classical balance-of-power imperatives. Secondly, *classical geopolitics* can also be supplemented by *critical geopolitics*, and its concerns with how territory and regions are regarded. Thirdly, IR realism can be supplemented with IR constructivism, and its concerns with how images and perceptions are generated and affect subsequent situations between states. There remains a bedrock of realism in the way that power and perception are intertwined with regard to Sino-Indian relations. Perceptions may be generated from power situations, but those perceptions may then shape how power is further used. This is exemplified in a negative general sense in IR's *security dilemma* syndrome. In the case of India, the geopolitical power advantages held by China have generated a sense of a threatened neighborhood in which China is perceived as a threat to which India needs to respond. As Guihong Zhang recognized, India has a discernible "lack of security trust" in Chinese intentions.<sup>8</sup>

Using, but also adjusting, IR classical realism in this fashion is not relativism; it is realism adjusted when faced with the complex realism of Sino-Indian relations. Any application of IR theory actually needs to be taken with caution over rigid application of theory. Wohlforth is right to talk of "unproductive paradigm wars"; and Glaser is right to advise that "there is no good reason for [IR] theorists to lock themselves into too narrow a box."<sup>9</sup> In practice, there still remains "the elusive quest" for theory; in which trying to construct the one and only paradigm for international relations is indeed akin to "the perils of Odysseus."<sup>10</sup> The advice of Katzenstein and Okawara with regard to Japanese foreign policy also seems to hold true if applied to Sino-Indian

relations; that there is a “case for analytical eclecticism” given that “the complex links between power, interest, and norms defy analytical capture by any one” exclusive methodological approach or “grand paradigm.”<sup>11</sup> Consequently, when considering the power and perceptions at play in Sino-Indian relations, classical realism/geopolitics related insights can be complemented by constructivism/critical geopolitics related insights.

Classical geopolitics and its stress on tangible visible concerns of location, resources and access is of continuing relevance for understanding Sino-Indian dynamics. Garver’s title *Protracted Contest* for his book on India–China relations was quite appropriate; dealing as it did with “the protracted contest in the foreign policies of India and China in the vast arc of land and waters lying between these two great nations,” a basic geopolitical frame of reference.<sup>12</sup> Indian politicians have not been averse to evoking basic geopolitical frameworks, both for India’s own strategic position, and with regard to Sino-Indian relations. India’s Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran admitted this in connection with “Asia, where the interests of both India and China intersect. The logic of geography is unrelenting and proximity is the most difficult and testing among diplomatic challenges a country faces.”<sup>13</sup> Geopolitics provides a challenge for both. The previous Foreign Minister, Yashwant Sinha, may have advised that China and India need to “try to ensure that each has sufficient strategic space,” yet it is uncertain if there is enough strategic space for both, be it in terms of actuality or of perceptions.<sup>14</sup> Their respective strategic space is in various ways the same spatial arena. From the Chinese side, Guihong Zhang admits “an emerging India does mean a strong competitor for China from South, West, Southeast and Central Asia to Indian and Pacific Oceans where their interests and influences will clash.”<sup>15</sup> From the Indian side, Malik also sees a similar geographical imperative, both states have “widening geopolitical horizons”; yet, as adjacent major states, “they both strive to stamp their authority on the same region” adjoining and in between them.<sup>16</sup>

IR constructivism with its stress on the more intangible invisible role of images, perceptions and misperceptions is also of relevance when considering Sino-Indian relations. In such a web of constructions, Yinhong Shi pointed out in 2002 that there were still “particularly dangerous . . . psychological estrangements” and antagonisms operating at the popular level between the Chinese and Indian nations.<sup>17</sup> Similar judgments were made by Garver: “the dominant *Gestalt* dominant among both Chinese and Indian analysts is an image of competition and rivalry” between the two powers.<sup>18</sup> For Ganguly, “fears and misgivings” were evident for India concerning the rise of China in Asia.<sup>19</sup> As of 2007, Jing-dong Yuan saw “mutual suspicions of each other’s intentions” as still very much in evidence between China and India; whilst Bajpae talked of the “climate of mistrust in Sino-Indian relations . . . mutual suspicion continues to permeate the Sino-Indian relationship.”<sup>20</sup> In a similar vein, *critical geopolitics*, as argued by people like Agnew and Tuathail, sees borders and regions as constructs shaped in the anvil of history and of perceptions, perceptions of oneself and perceptions of the Other. The Sino-Indian border, and respective Indian and Chinese views on their own overlapping neighborhoods, reflect some of this ideational sense of geopolitics.

A micro-level illustration of the way in which these tangible and intangible power and perceptions factors can overlap was evident in the Chinese probes during

December 2007 in the disputed Chumbi Valley, the junction point between India, Bhutan and China. These were greeted by warnings from Gokhale that such “incur-sions into Bhutan are precariously close to India’s chicken’s neck – the vulnerable Siliguri Corridor,” the narrow 20 kilometer wide corridor which joins Assam to the rest of India.<sup>21</sup> Rapid discussions took place between India’s Defense Minister and army leaders over Chinese intentions, where threat images exacerbate geopolitical potentiality; “India feels that there’s a larger Chinese military aim behind the incur-sions to test Indian army’s preparedness . . . in case Chinese slice through Bhutan and cut the Siliguri corridor off.”<sup>22</sup> India’s control of Arunachal Pradesh is of greater concern than ever; for Guruswamy “the Himalayas are no longer the barrier they once were. As China and India emerge as the world’s great economies and powers, can India possibly allow China a strategic trans-Himalayan space just a few miles from the plains” of northern India?<sup>23</sup> Around 6,000 Indian troops were consequently dis-patched in mid December to the disputed border area facing China. The strategic fear remains in Indian circles of China using its strength in the north to project southwards into India. In Bhartendu Singh’s mind, in 2006, “the strategic challenges must not be overlooked . . . imagine a scenario where China penetrates a Maoist-led Nepal and makes deep inroads into the Indo-Gangetic plains.”<sup>24</sup> This is now exacerbated by the coming into office of a Maoist-led government in Nepal in 2008, and with it Bhartendu Singh’s concerns there about the Sino-Indian “power game” and the particular strategic “mind game” of China.<sup>25</sup>

Another way that IR realism and constructivism converge is with regard to how moves by one side may trigger further responses from the other, the classic IR *security dilemma* action–reaction downward spiral generated by mistrust of intentions. Here, Garver’s 2002 analysis of security dilemma factors in Sino-Indian relations remains relevant today, a security predicament of the first order.<sup>26</sup> IR realism and constructivism converge again in the way of Robert Jervis’ pioneering work elsewhere on perceptions and misperceptions in international relations, yet he also feels that “Balance of Power is the best known, and perhaps the best, theory in international politics.”<sup>27</sup>

Within IR balance-of-power theory there are shades of variation. Waltz’ *neo-realism* sees balancing as an inherent part of international behavior, *structural realism* in other words, whereby “from the theory, one predicts that states will engage in balancing behavior whether or not balanced power is the end of their acts.”<sup>28</sup> States do not neces-sarily need to be officially formulating balance-of-power policies, but will of necessity unofficially carry them out.

One balancing setting is external balancing through explicit containment alliances, *hard balancing* in other words. This is something consciously carried out by states, and something that Mearsheimer’s *offensive realism* would stress as inevitable toward a rising power like China. However, both India and China have avoided such explicit hard balancing alliances toward each other. Another external balancing setting is seen through implicit constraint understandings, otherwise known as *soft balancing*. As Berridge argues, such understandings may have “lower visibility and general fuzziness” in comparison to tight hard balancing alliances; but still “possess the advantages of alliances without the disadvantages . . . since they are less entangling . . . less likely to impede that fluidity of alignment and re-alignment which is the essence of balance of

power diplomacy.”<sup>29</sup> This seems particularly appropriate for China’s long standing relationship with Pakistan, and with India’s more recent moves toward Japan and the US; looser hedging arrangements which have thus not shut the door on limited moves toward engagement between India and China. A third balancing setting is *internal balancing* through building up one’s own power, something both China and India have been engaged in. Of course, such moves can be the very thing generating a security dilemma and negative perceptions of the other, and so on. As Waldron argues, “India’s response is a good example of how China’s buildup is already eliciting counterbalancing responses around her periphery”; in the case of India, internal balancing with regard to strengthening its military forces, and soft balancing with others.<sup>30</sup>

Such balance-of-power imperatives can be considered alongside Walt and Sheehan’s arguments that states actually balance against threats more than against power per se.<sup>31</sup> Power and threat may well overlap but not necessarily, “there are factors beyond power that contribute to threat. Threat, potentially defined by a number of forces, can vary independent of power.”<sup>32</sup> Without power it is difficult to be a threat, but with power one is not necessarily a threat. It all depends on the context, on the actual states involved. For Walt, “balance-of-threat theory openly incorporates power, subsuming it (along with geography, offensive capabilities, and intentions) within the more general concept of *threat*.”<sup>33</sup> As such, his threat criteria explains “why one state may balance against another state which is not necessarily the strongest, but which is seen as more threatening on account of its proximity, aggressive intentions.”<sup>34</sup>

Whilst Walt applied and took his threat framework from Middle Eastern and then European examples, we can apply it to Sino-Indian relations. There, with regard to China, it is not only power capability, it is also China’s geopolitical location and links with various allies or proxies that make it a perceived threat for many in India. The US has more power than China. However, it is China that is perceived as the threat by India, for which India is more ready to balance against rather than with. This balance-of-threat logic was evident in 1998 when the Defense Minister George Fernandes famously asserted that “China is potential threat number one . . . China is and is likely to remain the primary security challenge to India in the medium and long-term”; for “the potential threat from China is greater than that from Pakistan and any person who is concerned about India’s security must agree with that,” a comment widely reported around the world, including China.<sup>35</sup> If we move forward a decade to 2008, identical perceptions were coming from Fernandes in the wake of China’s crackdown in Tibet, that China was “still potential threat number one.”<sup>36</sup> Both states can, and do, see each other as a threat, in part because of their bilateral power (internal balancing) vis-à-vis the other, but also because of the various alignments and understandings (soft balancing in effect) that each state has made with other states surrounding the other. This exacerbates security dilemma perceptions of threat and so forth.

A range of asymmetrical aspects have characterized their relationship; in terms of projection of power, perception of power, and perception of threat thereon. To some extent it has been a “one sided rivalry,” with India trying to catch up with China, but not the other way round.<sup>37</sup> If one stands back, Xuewu Gu reckons that while China’s concerns over India “mainly refer to strategic constellations and thereby to a relatively abstract level, Indian perceptions of threat seem to be much more concrete and

precise.”<sup>38</sup> China’s concerns over India’s “strategic constellations” point to India’s strengthening relations with Japan and the US. India’s “concrete and precise” concerns point to the territorial and military issues between the two countries.

In ideational terms, there have been “asymmetrical Indian and Chinese threat perceptions” of the other; whereby “Indians tend to be deeply apprehensive regarding China. Chinese, on the other hand, tend not to perceive a serious threat and find it difficult to understand why Indians might find China and its actions threatening.”<sup>39</sup> In part, this Chinese attitude has an element of deliberate propaganda, of media projection, with downgrading of possible threat situations so as to facilitate China’s ongoing strategy of Peaceful Rise. In part though, this has reflected the real situation of India having been less of a threat to China than China has been to India. This is so in terms of India’s relatively inferior economic and military strength in comparison to China, and in terms of China’s projection into South Asia having been more substantial than India’s projection into East Asia. Consequently, China has overtaken Pakistan to become the biggest external security consideration for India but India is not the biggest security concern for China. Instead the US and even Japan rank higher in shaping Chinese security concerns.

In terms of estimation and status allocation within the international system, China has been something of a benchmark for India, but not particularly the other way round. China is inside the United Nations Security Council as a Permanent Member, India remains outside. At times there has been a sense of Chinese strategists measuring India as somewhat inferior to China on the international board, considering India as a restricted regional power within South Asia rather than a wider Great Power. Back in 2002, Xuetong Yan’s analysis of China’s foreign policy toward major powers discussed and identified “other major powers” in the shape of the US, Russia, Europe and Japan, but ignored India.<sup>40</sup> Yan’s 2006 analysis of comparative power continued to accord India a relatively low place among potential and actual Great Powers, in which “China will also enhance her superiority over Japan, Russia and India in terms of comprehensive power within the next ten years.”<sup>41</sup> This is exactly what Indian strategists do not want to hear. The problem for Indian analysts like Bhartendu Singh is that “the Chinese have been slow to recognize India’s rightful position in international relations” as a fellow Great Power and fellow leader for Asia.<sup>42</sup> Of course “rightful position” is a loaded concept, what one state sees as its “rightful position” might not be shared by others. From Indian perspectives the criticism has been that “exclusion of India has been a running thread in Chinese policy . . . on China being a global player and India a regional player . . . India is not going to be defined by China but by itself.”<sup>43</sup>

China’s more closed political system means that Indian perspectives on relations between China and India are easier to track, another asymmetric feature of Sino-Indian relations. It has become apparent though that Chinese analysis in more recent years has concerned itself more than before with the implications of India’s rise, with India’s economic surge, with India’s greater readiness to develop an extended neighborhood presence, and with India’s potential readiness to engage in active Great Power diplomacy vis-à-vis other centers of power like the US. One of the outcomes of this greater Chinese attention on India is a divergence between official external diplomatic utterances and internal analysis of Sino-Indian relations, “internal Chinese views on

India are different from what they say to international media. There appears to be two views one for internal consumption and another benign one for external consumption,” with internal commentators readier to speculate on a rising India as a challenge to China.<sup>44</sup> China is now taking India more seriously than it did in the past, both as a potential friend and potential foe.<sup>45</sup> This now makes any questions of India’s alignment, seeming alignment, and potential alignment all the more important for China.

With such diverse prompts from IR theory, let us turn to various Sino-Indian security predicaments; namely their territorial border dispute, their nuclear arms race, their respective encirclement and alignment scenarios, and their respective geo-economics with regard to trade and energy.

### **Territorial Border Dispute**

Still unresolved in 2008, the territorial dispute between the two countries remains the clearest point of divergence between the two. India claims around 40,000 square kilometers of Chinese controlled territory (Aksai Chin) on the western flanks of the Himalayas; China claims around 92,000 square kilometers of Indian controlled territory (Arunachal Pradesh) on the eastern flanks.

Some history is worth presenting, not least because of its enduring features. Along the northwest of the Himalayas, the 1904 Anglo-Tibetan treaty left the Aksai Chin under British control. However, the Qing Empire, of which Tibet was nominally a part, rejected the treaty. Similar dynamics unfolded at the other end of the Himalayas. In the northeast, the MacMahon Line may have been agreed between British officials and Tibetan figures at the Simla Convention of 1913–14, but the Chinese authorities in Beijing refused to sign, and continued to reject the agreement. This area was only taken under effective British administrative control in the wake of the Lightfoot expedition of 1938 and the Mills expedition of 1944. In retrospect, this was a relatively late incorporation. As Guruswamy admits, India’s claim to “Arunachal Pradesh does not rest on any great historical tradition or cultural affinity. We are there because the British went there.”<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, both border arrangements could be seen by China as yet another of the many unequal treaties drawn up at China’s expense and without its agreement. China may have been relatively impotent then, but that was not to be permanent. The disputed territory remained as an issue for another day, an issue left for an independent Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China.

This territorial dispute reemerged as a growing issue in the late 1950s, as relations between these two Asian giants crumbled. In the east, the MacMahon Line’s disputed ambiguity was no longer sustainable. Consequently, a “new ‘great game’ on the borders of India, the giants’ version of chicken, had reached its climax” as both sides started troop movements in and around the MacMahon Line, with Indian probes becoming noticeable in India’s “forward policy.”<sup>47</sup> In the west, the largely uninhabited Aksai Chin had become an important communications linkage between Chinese Xinjiang and Tibet. Road building by China was discovered after the event by India, with varied probing movements ensuing. Diplomatic channels for negotiations were absent, instead “mis-perceptions” were all too evident in their lurch to war in 1962.<sup>48</sup>

Interpretations went beyond the immediate territorial issue, and have resonance for today. It is interesting to find Jawaharlal Nehru musing during the war:

It is a little naive to think that the trouble with China was essentially due to a dispute over some territories. It had deeper reasons. Two of the largest countries in Asia confronted each other over a vast border. They differed in many ways. And the test was as to whether any one of them would have a more dominating position than the other on the border and in Asia itself.<sup>49</sup>

Wider issues were similarly pointed out at the time by Indian commentators like Phadnis; the breakdown of relations “brought into the open the issue of Sino-Indian rivalry for Asian leadership which had previously been hidden behind the emotive [1950s] slogans of friendship between the two countries.”<sup>50</sup> Emotive identity issues were also involved. In 1959, Nehru explained India’s determination to maintain its full claims as being deeper than mere territory, as being a reflection of “national pride, self-respect . . . it is that which brings up people’s passion to a high level . . . and it is that which is happening in India today.”<sup>51</sup> He perhaps failed to discern that such pressures were also operating in China. Such pressures still operate on both sides.

The 1962 war was clear-cut, “militarily the Chinese victory was complete, the Indian defeat absolute.”<sup>52</sup> Chinese control of the Aksai Chin plateau was confirmed. China’s sweep into the northeast was not stopped by Indian military efforts. Instead, Chinese forces, after pushing India out of the disputed territory, then chose to withdraw to a *de facto* line back around the MacMahon Line. India was left humiliated, Nehru seemed emotionally ruined, with a festering wound left on India’s security psyche. The enemy from the north loomed ever larger. These events generated a radical change in Indian perceptions of China. The defeat was “a mindset-shattering event, a watershed in national psychology.”<sup>53</sup> Its effects have lasted to the present, “India’s distrustful animus toward China is a toxic element in world politics . . . the hostility derives, of course, from the Indian political class’ wounded memory of their country’s humiliation in the brief, fierce, border war of 1962.”<sup>54</sup> Over 40 year after the war, Jisi Wang could similarly from Beijing acknowledge “the psychological wounds left by the border war in 1962 need more time to be healed.”<sup>55</sup> As such, “mind-sets inured in sentiments of humiliation on one side or hurt feelings on the other” became an ongoing feature of India–China perceptions.<sup>56</sup>

Almost half a century on, and their border remains still in dispute and not subject to any substantive negotiations over sovereignty. It is significant for Malik that “the 4,056-kilometer (2,520 miles) frontier between India and China, one of the longest inter-state borders in the world, remains the only one of China’s land borders not defined, let alone demarcated, on maps or delineated on the ground.”<sup>57</sup> As of 2008, sovereignty claims still remain diametrically opposed. With Chinese claims renewed in greater vigor in recent years, Malik argued in 2007 that “China’s increasing assertiveness over the disputed borders has led to a rapid meltdown in the Sino-Indian border talks and a ‘mini-Cold War’ has quietly taken hold at the diplomatic level during the past two years, despite public protestations of amity.”<sup>58</sup> His perception of Chinese motives for greater assertiveness is that “an unsettled border provides China the strategic leverage to keep India uncertain about its intentions, and nervous about its capabilities, while exposing India’s vulnerabilities and weaknesses, and ensuring New Delhi’s ‘good behavior’ on issues of vital concern to China.”<sup>59</sup>

Movement on resolving the border issue has been minimal. The de facto LAC (Line of Actual Control) remains to be established for the Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh areas, with China dragging its feet on exchanging LAC maps.<sup>60</sup> Straying by Chinese forces, accidentally or not, across the LACs remained an issue in 2007.<sup>61</sup> Admittedly, guiding principles and parameters for negotiations were agreed in 2005, but no negotiations have ensued from that. Instead, China reiterated its full claims to Arunachal Pradesh during Hu Jintao's visit to India in 2006, again in 2007, and again in the wake of Manmohan Singh's trip to China in 2008. Some confidence-building measures have been initiated, including mutual troop reductions, regular meetings of local military commanders, and advanced notification of military exercises. However, infrastructure links on both sides of the LAC are being bolstered by each state, with strategic claims in mind. Indeed, with mutual protests over incursions in the disputed territory and across the LAC, the *Times of India* pointed out in 2008 that "the problem, as the India keeps underscoring internally, is that no global relationship with China will withstand the strains of these repeated bilateral protests."<sup>62</sup>

Their Himalayan frontiers remain an obvious point of future contention, the cause of war in 1962, and far from solution in 2008. Maxwell's prognosis of almost 40 years ago remains persuasive; "if the Chinese were ever to be driven off the Aksai Chin plateau, it could only be after they had been militarily defeated elsewhere."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, "the overall superiority in numbers of the Chinese army and their advantages in movement on the Tibetan plateau make it likely that the Indians can never hope to mount a successful offensive action anywhere on the northern borders – so long as China's central power is unbroken."<sup>64</sup> This could encourage China to defer any settlement, and instead put more pressure on India, through China maintaining such a militarily advantageous strategic position along the Himalayan frontiers. There is though a logical territorial division to be shaped through linking de facto control with de jure sovereignty, with China thereby retaining the Aksai Chin and India retaining Arunachal Pradesh. However, in Arunachal Pradesh the disputed Tawang pocket, and its Tibetan connections, complicates such a relatively tidy trade-off.

### Nuclear Arms Race

India's defeat in war in 1962 was quickly followed by another uncomfortable military development for India, China's explosion of a nuclear device in 1964. This may have been carried out by Beijing primarily with the US and perhaps the Soviet Union in mind. However, one side effect was that India was now faced not only with a territorial foe, but also a nuclear foe, an uncomfortable power imbalance from India's point of view.

There may have been some limited moves toward reducing Sino-Indian hostilities following Rajiv Gandhi's trip to China in 1988, but relations still remained quite cool in the 1990s. Underlying perceptions of mistrust were very clear on India's side, as well as a sense of having been overtaken in the global pecking order and estimation. China was firmly in Indian sights in the late 1990s, as someone to be strategically matched, something of an ongoing quest. At the time, 1997, Mohan felt that given "the national determination in India to liberate itself from the current second class status in world affairs . . . New Delhi will find it impossible to give up its search for global

status similar to that of China”; in which “New Delhi is most unlikely give up its determination to acquire a functional nuclear deterrent against Beijing . . . India will remain committed to building a small but functional deterrent against China.”<sup>65</sup> China’s installation of CSS-5s medium range missiles in Tibet, with a range of about 1,333 miles, was highlighted in the Indian media during 1997 as targeting India.<sup>66</sup>

Raja Mohan’s 1997 predictions were quickly met, as India moved in 1998 toward transforming its implicit 1974 nuclear capability into an explicit realized capacity. The Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was blunt concerning China factors behind the Pokhran-II tests by India:

We have an overt nuclear weapons state [China] on our borders, a state that committed armed aggression against India in 1962. Although our relations with that country have improved in the last decade or so, an atmosphere of distrust persists, mainly due to the unresolved border problem. To add to the distrust, that country has materially helped another neighbour of ours [Pakistan] to become a covert nuclear weapons state.<sup>67</sup>

Vajpayee may not have intended this letter to the US president to be publicized; but the sentiments were clear enough, objectively and subjectively.

Indian commentators like General Amarjit Kalkat, who had commanded the Indian peace keeping forces in Sri Lanka in 1987, were also clear at the time where the message of India’s nuclear explosions was aimed. It was not a local regional demonstration against Pakistan. Instead, Kalkat argued that:

What strikes me as being particularly significant is their effect on India–China relations. These will be put on an even footing . . . The tests are really an attempt to correct the current military and technological imbalance vis-à-vis China, which is already in the threshold of being a world super power . . . Countries tend to respect equals and nuclear parity does help provide the level playing field needed to build such an equalitarian relationship. China has been a nuclear power for long, but India was not till it showed its capability this week.<sup>68</sup>

Similar logic was apparent with India’s successful testing of an Agni-II medium range (2,500–3,000 kilometers/1,550–1,860 miles) missile in 1999. Dinkar Shukla at the Government of India’s Press Information Bureau asserted that “Pokhran-II and Agni-II are a symbol of a resurgent India,” in which “the Pakistani threat is only a marginal factor in New Delhi’s security calculus. Agni is at the heart of deterrence in the larger context of the Sino-Indian equation.”<sup>69</sup> Such considerations were why Chellaney argued in 2000 that “a major motivation for India’s 1998 nuclear tests was the growing military asymmetry with China.”<sup>70</sup>

IR theory enters the picture with regard to China’s differing responses in 1962 and 1998. Whereas China took military action against India in 1962, it initially responded fairly mildly to India’s nuclear explosion in 1998. Lei Guang argues that different perceptions were in play. In 1962, China could feel that its identity was at stake through India refusing to negotiate over what China considered was an unequal treaty imposed

on it in earlier times of weakness. Guang argues that “given the centrality of territory to the Chinese national identity, what constituted the border between China and its neighbour was no longer simply a matter of administrative marking.”<sup>71</sup> Instead, there was a threefold challenge to China, to its perceived territory, sovereignty and legitimacy. Consequently, this “triple assault on China’s fundamental identity as a nation-state contributed to its final decision to resort to violence in 1962.”<sup>72</sup> Such consideration are rightly seen by Guang as an example of IR constructivism.<sup>73</sup>

Conversely, China took a more subdued and restrained approach to India’s nuclear testing in 1998. Guang explains this difference by arguing that China’s core identity was not particularly threatened by this event; India’s nuclear explosion “did not constitute a frontal attack on the PRC’s identity in 1998. On the contrary, it testified to China’s nuclear power and affirmed its position as a major power in the region.”<sup>74</sup> This did not mean that China was not concerned about India’s nuclear explosion. What it did mean was that China responded in different ways and at a different pitch than in 1962. As Guang argues, “a main thrust of the Chinese reaction to India’s nuclear tests in 1998 was geopolitical in nature. Unlike in 1962, what was at stake for China in 1998 was its national security, not its fundamental identity as a modern nation-state.”<sup>75</sup> Its power advantages enabled a cooler calculated restraint in 1998.

Nuclear rivalry continues to affect Sino-Indian relations. A nuclear arms race, and its “nuclear security dilemma” dynamics, adds a competitive spiral element to their relationship.<sup>76</sup> Even as the dust from India’s Pokhran-II tests was settling, further deployment of Chinese missiles was causing alarm in India, Chellaney pointing out in 2000 that “India’s largest neighbor [China] is conducting the biggest expansion of missile capabilities anywhere in the world. The first of these new missiles, the Dongfeng (DF) 31, last tested in July 1999, can reach every corner of India but little of U.S. territory.”<sup>77</sup> Chellaney’s own sense of the political context of China’s nuclear program was stark, “India’s existing modest deterrent capabilities will be gravely undermined as China builds up its nuclear and missile armories. The Sino-Indian asymmetry will increase . . . India will have every incentive to acquire similar assets that play a primary role in power-projection strategies.”<sup>78</sup> An offensive weapons spiral was in the offing from both sides. Whilst welcoming US attempts to develop a AMD (Anti-Missile Defense) system, Chellaney acknowledged and concluded that “nevertheless, the likely response of those states whose security will be directly affected, particularly China, will significantly affect India’s interests. This is what India has to worry about”; even though “in due course, the action–reaction cycle triggered by missile defenses could drive India closer to the United States.”<sup>79</sup> Strategic alignment between India and the US is Beijing’s nightmare.

In terms of power projection, China’s control of Tibet has seen its installation of various medium and intermediate range missile systems. These missile systems are irrelevant to curbing domestic discontent inside Tibet, but do literally and strategically point outside Tibet toward India, its capital Delhi and other major Indian cities. Indian analysts are acutely aware of these implications. For Mahapatra, this military buildup in Tibet is “not only aimed at overwhelming India militarily, but to enable Chinese coercive diplomacy in respect of the border dispute.”<sup>80</sup> Asymmetries is in play. Installation of intermediate and medium range ballistic missiles enables China to

immediately and easily threaten India; whereas the main centers of China, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou remained far away from India. Back in 1999, Kanwal was lamenting that “realistic deterrence against China can only be achieved by developing a demonstrated capability to target major Chinese cities such as Beijing and Shanghai with nuclear weapons.”<sup>81</sup> However, India’s successful testing of the Agni-III intermediate range ballistic missile in 2007 and 2008, with a range of 3,500 kilometers (2,170 miles), for the first time brings many of China’s main cities within range of India’s nuclear strike capability. The Agni-I short range ballistic missile is clearly oriented towards Pakistan, Agni-III is equally clearly oriented towards China, “China-specific” in Pandit’s eyes.<sup>82</sup> India’s nuclear mobility is strengthened by the submarine based Sagarika ballistic missile launches carried out in 2008. India is set to test its augmented Agni-III+/IV missile system, with a range of 5,000 kilometers (3,110 miles) in early 2009, enabling India to target all of China for the first time.<sup>83</sup> From China’s point of view, this increases its nuclear encirclement, in part from India, in part from India in conjunction with the United States.

Of course, India’s and China’s modernization and expansion of their nuclear and missile capability is not necessarily just aimed at each other. India has its ongoing concerns with Pakistan, China has its own set of concerns with the United States. Nevertheless, India and China also feed off each other’s nuclear programs. The final twist in the nuclear relationship is India’s drive to establish an effective anti-ballistic MDS (Missile Defense System), in part through collaboration with the United States, but in part under its own efforts. Following successful interceptor missile tests in 2006 and 2007, India claims to have developed an ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) capacity, with operational deployment scheduled by 2011. Classic security dilemma dynamics operate here. As admitted by Mohanty, “China would watch India’s growing missile defense capability very carefully . . . there is hardly any doubt that both China and Pakistan would most likely try to strengthen their missile strike capabilities to maintain the strategic deterrence.”<sup>84</sup> From India’s point of view, China’s close nuclear links with Pakistan remains a further exacerbating and exasperating factor in Sino-Indian relations, and is part of their respective encirclement and alignment scenarios to which we now turn.

### Encirclement and Alignment Scenarios

Paradoxes are present in this area. Neither government claims to be encircling the other, with both governments rejecting such interpretations of their own policies. However, a de facto element of encirclement seems apparent, power projection that happens to be around each other has come about. Moreover, whilst denying encirclement as characterizing their own policies, both states have expressed concerns over apparent encirclement-seeming activities and outcomes from the other. A similar situation is seen with alignment issues. Both countries claim not to be aligning against the other. Nevertheless, amid their varied strategic constellations, certain understandings are closer than others and certain relations have the effect of a degree of alignment against the other side, implicitly if not explicitly. In IR terms this is soft balancing rather than hard balancing, but balancing none the less. There still remains the tangled dynamics, already evident in the 1980s, of how “the circles get blurred when one

state's encirclement crosses another's counter-encirclement. Strategists' paranoias feed on this geometry of geopolitics."<sup>85</sup>

Indian analysts have long talked about China's encirclement of India, Kapila considering that "China's strategic encirclement of India has been an ongoing process all along ever since 1962."<sup>86</sup> This is seen as quite deliberate, if unstated, on the part of China. As Kanwal put it in 1999, Chinese activities "clearly indicate" that "concerted efforts are underway aimed at the strategic encirclement of India . . . quite obviously designed to marginalise India in the long-term and reduce India to the status of a sub-regional power," for "it [China] is unlikely to countenance India's aspirations to become a major regional power in the Asia-Pacific region."<sup>87</sup> This explicit sense of India's strategic encirclement by China remains high for many Indian analysts like Malik, Kapila, Pant and Verma, to name but four. Despite disclaimers from Beijing, India faces a tangible enough growing Chinese presence and power projection around itself, both on land and sea.

The encirclement nightmare for India is straightforward enough. To the north comes China's military buildup in Tibet, which gives China strategic depth and a potential offensive platform against India from its Himalayan heights, able to be realized with its construction of highway and railway infrastructure, "China's strategic masterstroke."<sup>88</sup> Deliberations over the implications of such projects brought wider comments from Indian commentators. For Rajamohan, Tibetan "road and access issues are classic geopolitics . . . [which] have huge consequences for India"; and for Major General Dipankar Banerjee "roads and connectivity are crucial issues around which nations [China] develop strategic plans," but which cause "anxiety though at the same time" in India.<sup>89</sup> To the south, China's *String of Pearls* policy and its drive for a blue water naval presence has brought China into the Indian Ocean and firmly onto India's strategic radar.<sup>90</sup> Chinese moves to establish a presence at Hambantota in Sri Lanka brings China right in "India's backyard."<sup>91</sup> Chinese contacts and discussions in the Maldives, and talk of possible military facilities, continue to raise concerns among Indian commentators.<sup>92</sup> Hu Jintao's trip to the Seychelles in February 2007 strengthened such Indian concerns over Chinese penetration.

China's presence and pressure is multiplied through its "strategic proxies," which enable China to reinforce its own land and maritime pressures on India.<sup>93</sup> On India's eastern flank comes Bangladesh's *Defense Cooperation Agreement* with China, signed in 2002. Amid talk of Chinese use of Chittagong harbor, Kapila saw the agreement as meaning "China gets a strategic toe-hold on India's Eastern flank in Bangladesh. China's strategic encirclement of India is completed."<sup>94</sup> Further east, Chinese links with Myanmar were fostered during the 1990s, with the PRC ready to offer diplomatic and military support to an isolated military junta regime. This bypasses the Malacca Straits, giving the PRC access to Myanmar's coastline, use of naval and communication facilities in Myanmar and frontage onto the Indian Ocean. This serves China's own needs for energy security, but it also can be seen by India as a further encirclement step. Perception and reality may have diverged here, "this apparent intrusion by China into the northeast Indian Ocean has strongly influenced the strategic perceptions and policies of Burma's regional neighbors, notably India" even though such apparent bases may indeed be more "myth" than reality.<sup>95</sup> To India's west, China's long

established links with Pakistan continue to have firm military and strategic consequences for India, in the “China–Pakistan nexus” the “aim is to encircle India.”<sup>96</sup> These links have been strengthened through infrastructural transport projects on land, and through the opening of Gwadar in 2007, Chinese-funded and able to offer long-distance naval facilities for China. The links, potential and actual, for China between these “pearls” have been noticed, most recently by India’s naval chief Admiral Sureesh Mehta as part of “Chinese designs on the Indian Ocean.”<sup>97</sup> Gwadar, Hambantota and Sittwe were all seen by Raman as constituting “China’s strategic triangle” around India.<sup>98</sup>

Faced with China’s evident rise on and around its borders, commentators like Kanwal argued that for “countering China’s strategic encirclement of India . . . India, therefore, needs to ensure the development of adequate military capabilities”; and that “India needs to establish strategic linkages [with other concerned states] . . . to counter-balance China’s growing power and influence. India’s strategy should also focus on developing adequately powerful levers.”<sup>99</sup> India’s strategy under the BJP and Congress governments has incorporated such positions in recent years. Thus, India has sought to build up its own military strength, in effect IR internal balancing. India also seeks to project its power and presence into what it calls officially calls its *extended neighborhood* outside South Asia, some of which is also in China’s strategic backyard. Finally, India has also sought Kanwal’s closer “strategic linkages” with other concerned powers, which achieves something of a soft balancing of China. The Indian government denies any particular explicit containment or hard balancing strategy toward China, and India remains wary of becoming a pawn for other countries. However, in effect, some *constraint* of China is arising.

In such a vein, India’s redeployment of long range airforce planes to the northeastern front poses wider problems for China.<sup>100</sup> India has been playing a greater role in forward projection of power from its Andaman FEC (Far Eastern Command), and gradually assuming a greater security presence in the Malacca Straits, the very thing guaranteed to heighten China’s so-called *Malacca Dilemma* fears. India’s Look East policy has brought India into China’s own southern backyard. The policy has developed security-military elements alongside the initial economic ones. Despite official Indian disavowal of containment or encirclement of China being sought, Indian commentators like Batabyal have been blunt. He argues, from explicit and self-avowedly IR realism perspectives, that “in this great game, competition and rivalry with China has become a significant component” for India “to play a new balancing game against China in the Southeast Asian and the Asia-Pacific region.”<sup>101</sup> Similar realism perspectives can be seen with Pant’s sense of India’s “rising ambitions, with an eye on China” at work in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>102</sup> China-related military-security agreements were reached between India and Indonesia in 2007.<sup>103</sup> Further north comes the “China factor” behind the 2000 defense agreement, military cooperation and official strategic partnership established between Vietnam and India.<sup>104</sup> Indo-Vietnamese naval cooperation has been an ongoing feature of their relationship. Indian commentators like Karnad see geopolitical parallels: “by cultivating a resolute Vietnam as a close regional ally and security partner in the manner China has done Pakistan, India can pay Beijing back in the same coin.”<sup>105</sup> A Vietnam card is there to be played by India. In other words, for

Yogendra Singh, “China has successfully created strategic pressure over India by bringing Myanmar and Pakistan within its sphere of influence. A strategic partnership with Vietnam can provide India an opportunity to pressurize China” in a similar fashion.<sup>106</sup>

On China’s land borders, India’s presence in Central Asia is also, to some extent, driven by China considerations.<sup>107</sup> Post-Taliban Afghanistan has seen India’s influence strengthened and that of Pakistan, China’s ‘strategic proxy’, weakened. Post-Soviet Tajikistan has seen India projecting its power still further; initially in the fight against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, and maintained more recently with the setting up of Ayni as a military base for use by the Indian airforce. Elsewhere in Central Asia, military-security links were set up between India and Mongolia in 2006.

Any such seeming encirclement projection by India has however been more limited than China’s seeming encirclement of India, which has been more immediate, more extended, and closer. Yet, this asymmetrical encirclement deficiency for India is counterbalanced by its wider relations with other powers. This is not exactly full blown alignment, but it has aspects of it. India’s emerging security-strategic agreements with other powers in the Asia-Pacific do in practice point to some balancing of China; for Parthasarathy, “India will have to seek much closer relations with China’s neighbours . . . if a healthy balance of power in Asia is to be ensured.”<sup>108</sup> The two states that China is most concerned about India moving closer to are Japan and the US.

India’s Look East policy has brought it into closer contact with Japan, in part fostered by “shared concerns over China” and its growing military shadow.<sup>109</sup> Japanese criticisms of India’s 1998 nuclear testing has been largely washed away, signaled in their joint *Partnership in the New Asian Era: Strategic Orientation of Japan–India Global Partnership* agreement drawn up in 2005, with a further *Japan–India Strategic and Global Partnership* agreement signed in 2006. Military-security cooperation has brought Japanese naval units into the Indian Ocean alongside India; and has brought Indian naval units into East Asia alongside Japan. From a geopolitical point of view, India and Japan are able to pose a two pronged pincer challenge to China. It was from this strategic viewpoint that Roy argued, in the wake of Indian concerns about China’s new long range nuclear submarine facilities unearthed in May 2008 at Sanya facing the South China Sea, that “it will now be the decision of its neighbours from Japan to India whether to succumb to China’s might or retain their independence” through closer cooperation.<sup>110</sup> Such military-security cooperation between India and Japan is more advanced than any limited (and they are very limited) military cooperation between either India and China or between Japan and China. India’s most significant card toward China is its burgeoning political-military-security relationship with the US, sealed with their *New Framework for the U.S.–India Defense Relationship* agreement of 2005 and widening strategic cooperation. Indian analysts like Cherian were clear enough in seeing a “China factor” at play in this convergence of Indian and US perceived interests.<sup>111</sup> US–India military exercises have reached a height of substance and interoperability, interspersed with serious war game exercises which have gone far beyond any hesitant China–India, or indeed China–US, military relations.

Beijing is well aware of these de facto balancing outcomes against it. As the US moved to strengthen military links with India, China’s official media was warning that

“by strengthening its ties with the South Asian country, the United States can . . . further squeeze . . . China’s strategic clout out of the region.”<sup>112</sup> It was clear enough for the *People’s Daily* that the 2005 US–India defense agreement was “intended to diminish China’s influence in this region . . . Although both sides say the agreement has nothing to do with China . . . the China factor is only too obvious.”<sup>113</sup> The US–India nuclear technology agreement was similarly interpreted in the approved Chinese media; the *Beijing Review* reckoning in 2007 that “the accord could reset the global balance of power, because U.S. policymakers see India as a counterweight to mighty China.”<sup>114</sup> In China’s eyes, Japan’s advocacy of India’s inclusion in the 2005 East Asia Summit, over some Chinese resistance, was because “Japan is trying to drag countries outside this region such as Australia and India into the community to serve as a counterbalance to China . . . to build up US, Japan-centered western dominance.”<sup>115</sup> Even as some modest trade links were reopened between Tibet and northern India in July 2006, it was still noticed by Lijun Zhang how “current China–India bilateral relations show some tension . . . The United States and Japan are big powers . . . both countries are trying to prop up and engage India, which has led to more complicated and delicate relations between China and India.”<sup>116</sup>

China’s land advantages over India are to some extent balanced by India’s maritime strength. November 2007 saw the Indian navy strengthening its eastern deployment and ongoing strength, away from its traditional foe Pakistan and toward its rising rival China. India’s regional commander, Vice Admiral Raman Suthan, was clear enough in pinpointing China as the particular concern prompting this redistribution of naval strength; “China has fuel interests of its own as fuel lines from Africa and the Gulf run through these waters, and so they are also building up their navy,” which means “we keep hearing about China’s interest in Coco Island and are wary of its growing interest in the region, and we are keeping a close watch.”<sup>117</sup> China’s concerns over India’s naval power, but also its naval diplomacy, was reiterated with the MALABAR 2007-2 exercises in September 2007. This saw large Indian and US naval forces, along with smaller elements from Japan, Australia and Singapore, carrying out war game exercises in the Bay of Bengal, opposite Myanmar. Indian commentators were right to note a “miffed” China.<sup>118</sup> Officials, of course, denied any anti-China considerations behind the exercises; but Indian commentators were not afraid to point out the China considerations, “the necessity and an unstated additional aim of these exercises were probably to pose a ‘strategic deterrence’ to China.”<sup>119</sup>

During the last decade there has been a readiness of the Indian Navy to deploy into China’s maritime sphere, most notably the South China Sea claimed by China. The Indian Navy deployed into these waters in 2000, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2007 and 2008. India’s naval operations in the East China Sea in April 2007, with both Japanese and US naval units, was greeted with some suspicion by the Chinese media; “it is absolutely not new for Japan and the U.S. to sit down and plot conspiracies together but it is rather intriguing to get India involved,” amid reiteration that such moves could reflect how “the joint military exercise was focused on China with a purpose of encircling it militarily, and this constitutes a concrete move to enhance the Japan–India–Australia–US military alliance.”<sup>120</sup> Asymmetrical arrangements were present as the Indian flotilla of five warships carried out extended MALABAR 2007-1 war game exercises, including

anti-submarine exercises particularly appropriate for combating China's naval profile. In contrast, the Indian involvement with China was a somewhat token port call by two of the ships, with no particular military exercises carried out. Chinese sources remained concerned about India's involvement with US forces, two strategic-military camps were in the offing, "as an old-brand power, the U.S. is striving to win the support of Japan and India in a bid to prevent China and Russia from joining forces."<sup>121</sup>

### Trade and Energy

Alongside geopolitics comes geo-economics, rising in importance for the twenty-first century. China's economic growth continues at over 10 percent, with India's growth now also approaching double digit figures. Such simultaneous growth has generated optimistic enough talk, especially on China's side, on China and India's joint role underpinning general Asian economic growth.<sup>122</sup> Their simultaneous growth sees a win-win situation evoked within what has been called the *Asian Century*, a paradigm underpinned by talk of a converging *Indian Century* and *Chinese Century*.<sup>123</sup> Such economic growth has had several consequences. There has been some competition in terms of economic models and in terms of economic prestige. China's economic surge is proving an example but also a warning to India. As Sahgal and Palit put it, "the Singh Doctrine equates an economically strong India with a strategically secure India . . . In the eyes of many Indians, China is an outstanding example in this regard."<sup>124</sup> Consequently, "at the moment, among developing Asian economies, China continues to outperform India. India believes it needs to emulate the Chinese success for translating its potential into outcomes" and "keeping up with China is, to an important degree, behind the policy shifts in India."<sup>125</sup> Meanwhile, their respective economic growths gives each of them a greater ability to fund bigger military budgets.

Trade is likely to continue increasing rapidly.<sup>126</sup> China had already risen to become India's second biggest external trade partner by 2007, it became the biggest one by 2008. IR *liberalism* stresses the smoothing effects of such economic interdependence in a globalized world. However, three cautions come to mind here. Two asymmetrical distortions are present. Firstly, trade with India is less important for China, where its trade relations with the US, Japan, and the EU are likely to remain much more important. Secondly there is a growing trade imbalance between the two countries, a trade imbalance that is becoming the focus of negative comment in India as a "partnership of unequals."<sup>127</sup> Finally, an additional caution lies in closer economic links not necessarily precluding political clashes. After all, trade between Germany and Britain was huge in 1914, yet this did not stop the governments of these two entwined economies from going to war then. A different twist is that with military conflict blocked through the nuclear cap, economic conflict may be taking its place, "while the new Asian balance of power is increasingly divided along Sino-Indian lines, nuclear parity shifts competition to the economic sphere."<sup>128</sup>

Increased economic growth has also increased their need for energy imports, and with it a greater need on the part of both countries for securing energy resource use and access, sometimes at each other's expense. Competition over control and access of energy resources is likely to grow in importance over the coming years. Energy

dynamics remain evident for Indian commentators. Bajpae's scenario seems likely to continue of "India, China locked in energy game," and Sengupta's sense remains valid that "hovering over India's energy quest is its biggest competitor: China."<sup>129</sup> The Indian government admits as much, albeit circumspectly. For India's Prime Minister, it was a case that "China is ahead of us in planning for its energy security. India can no longer be complacent."<sup>130</sup> For India's Oil Minister, it was a similar matter, "almost everywhere in the world that an Indian goes in quest of energy, chances are that he will run into a Chinese engaged in the same hunt. The Chinese hunter has been rather more successful than the Indian on several occasions in the recent past."<sup>131</sup> Despite some talk of cooperation, and a few limited joint venture bids, the two countries remain up against each other in regional and global energy markets.

Ganguly argued to the US Senate that "although some analysts in India's strategic community do harbor hopes of potential cooperation between India and China in their global quest for energy resources, these hopes represent the triumph of fond wishes over harsh realities," for "India is in a fundamentally competitive if not conflictual relationship with China."<sup>132</sup> His testimony was interesting, insofar as he commented on why the unofficial conflictual style analysis of many Indian commentators does not generally get reflected in the official consensual style government statements. It is a question of not stirring up extra friction and complications. As Ganguly explained, "India sees China as its principal competitor in this global quest for energy. Indian officials are loath to admit publicly the existence of such competition, to avoid possible political friction with their behemoth northern neighbor," able to stir up trouble around India's borders.<sup>133</sup>

Again geopolitics comes into the equation. In particular, there is a discernible nexus between energy and maritime concerns in Sino-Indian relations.<sup>134</sup> Energy reserves that India is now using from the Russian Far East, Sakhalin, give it a stake in keeping the SLOC (Sea Lanes of Communication) open in East Asia. The South China Sea, another potential energy field wanting to be tapped by India, is an area claimed by China, but disputed with other Southeast Asian states. The block placed by Beijing at the end of 2007 on India's attempts to drill for oil in the South China Sea, in a part controlled by Vietnam but claimed by China, brought angry Indian comments. For Jha, "this Chinese declaration has come as a frontal attack against India's pursuit of energy security," whereby "one can say that China is bullying countries like India . . . China is hitting India's soft belly at will and India should do something serious about it . . . the time has come for India to assert itself."<sup>135</sup> India's military and economic involvement in the South China Sea is likely to grow in the future, as part of its envisaged extended neighborhood. In Myanmar, important energy bids lost by India to China during 2006–07 will likely spur India to greater efforts to win back energy access in Myanmar. India may hope to have the Indian Ocean as its particular arena, in effect as India's ocean. However, China's need for access to energy resources is bringing it out into the Indian Ocean to secure its own SLOC; taking it to the waters off Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka and further across the Indian Ocean to the Middle East. In Central Asia, competition between China and India, already seen in China's purchase of PetroKazakstan in 2005 over the heads of India, is likely to continue.

### Toward the Future

At the time of writing, Sino-Indian relations are clouded by China's crackdown on Tibetan protests and rioting during March–May 2008. For IR *democracy = peace* theorists, it all served as an unpleasant reminder of Beijing's undemocratic nature. Whilst the Indian government remained muted in its responses, commentators like Ganguly were forthright in arguing that “India does itself a disservice by not standing up to China over its treatment of Tibet” for “if India wishes to be considered a great power, it needs to display a greater degree of independence and not kowtow to Beijing . . . Indian policymakers have been . . . Finlandised – constrained by a foreign power.”<sup>136</sup> In short, questions of geopolitical control as well as Great Power status and credibility are entwined in such responses.

If we look to the future, Mukherjee's “logic of geography” will keep India and China closely involved with each other, not only along their immediate unresolved borders, but also wider afield. In geographical terms, some of India's self-proclaimed extended neighborhood will also remain China's strategic backyard, particularly in the case of Central Asia and Southeast Asia. This in turn is likely to maintain some mutual encirclement fears, and the security dilemma spiral between these two “leviathans.”<sup>137</sup> Guihong Zhang is right in pointing out that “with the dual rise of Beijing and New Delhi in international society, their respective interests and influence will inevitably encounter each other in the Asian subregions,” but is less convincing with his verdict that “more China–India cooperation than competition will be sequentially seen in Central, Southeast, and South Asia in the future.”<sup>138</sup> Using regionalism and interdependency theory, Astarita argues that although conflicting interests and competitive interactions frameworks currently characterize the region, a collaborative scenario in which “China and India play a leading but concerted role is more likely to happen.”<sup>139</sup> However, her Sino-Indian collaborative scenario for the future remains just that, a scenario which is far from convincing, given their conflicting interests in their neighboring regions and their rivalry within the varied regional organizations in Asia.

Whilst India has never denied China's rise and Great Power status, the same has not necessarily been true previously for China vis-à-vis India. The question is raised by Chinese analysts over whether the US will accept a Chinese rise, amid IR *power transition* scenarios of inevitable conflict; but these questions can also be applied to the Asia-Pacific over how far China will really accept India's rise? There still remains the problem posed by Kondapalli in 2006, typifying widespread Indian perceptions, “the issue is that China has never recognized India . . . as a major power. China will never accept the rise of another power in Asia” like India.<sup>140</sup> Geopolitics and power perceptions can be seen in the 2007 comments of Roy over localities and feelings, that “China would like India to remain locked in South Asia . . . India has always been seen by Beijing as the main stumbling block to a unipolar Asia dominated by China.”<sup>141</sup> Affronted national sensitivities lay behind Ramachandaran's 2008 feeling that “Beijing had ridiculed India's regional aspirations and was especially derisive of New Delhi's ‘Look East’ policy.”<sup>142</sup>

A “realpolitik nationalism” will almost certainly remain present in China's foreign policy.<sup>143</sup> With regard to Sino-Indian relations, some Chinese analysts have been

direct enough on its continuing competitive geographical-cum-geopolitical nature.<sup>144</sup> Ch'ien-peng Chung argues that "even if the territorial dispute were resolved, India and China would still retain a competitive relationship in the Asia-Pacific region, being as they are, two Asiatic giants aspiring to Great Power status."<sup>145</sup> In like fashion, Xuewu Gu argues that "this simultaneous quest for power . . . on the same continent, at the same time . . . makes competition for political, diplomatic, military and economic resources on an international scale inevitable."<sup>146</sup> In India, Kapila sees a similar direction for the future; "China and India in their trajectory towards global power status can be expected to jostle with each other for political and strategic influence both in India's contiguous regions and regions further afield, which "in itself carries the seeds of future competitive rivalries if not adversarial and conflictual potential."<sup>147</sup> This is why Pant argues that "security competition between the two regional giants will be all but inevitable" in the coming years.<sup>148</sup>

From China's point of view, it retains direct power advantages and geopolitical leverage, although it is also hedging against India's rise, through China's own internal balancing and soft balancing as well as some limited engagement.<sup>149</sup> Beijing will remain concerned about India aligning with any other significant powers against China. Consequently, China is likely to be prepared to make some concessions to India, and try to get India to instead balance with itself against US preeminence in the international system.

This means that India may be courted by powers concerned about China, as well as being courted by China. India is becoming a credible rival to China and for some a credible partner. This is why Indian commentators consider that "India can be an important swing player" in the evolving international system; able to cooperate with Russia and to an extent China in their strategic trilateral arrangement; yet also courted by the United States and Japan in their particular alignments.<sup>150</sup> Such swing factors enable India to counter China's otherwise one to one advantages over it.

India, like others, remains uncertain about China's long term intentions. Structural and perceptual uncertainties surround China for the coming century. This is not surprising, indeed it is somewhat inevitable. Goldstein argues that the approach taken by China since the late 1990s, of internal economic strengthening underpinning selective military modernization and the avoidance of external adventurism, is something that "finesses questions about the longer term."<sup>151</sup> He correctly enough considers that China's "strategy of transition" is set to run for another 30–40 years.<sup>152</sup> As such, it avoids the longer term issue of what happens once China has risen, once it has achieved its target for the mid century of achieving higher standards of wealth and strength. China will have the greater capability by the second half of the twenty-first century, but how will it then choose to use it, what will its intentions be for the international system, and for its neighbor India?

Faced with uncertainties over China's long term strategic intentions, Indian strategy for the future remains threefold. Firstly, India is playing for time. In unilateral terms India is using a growing economic strength to fund and facilitate the modernization and expansion of its own military strength and presence in its immediate and extended neighborhood. However, this does bring India up against China, where there are a couple of strategies in mind: engagement and soft balancing.

Proponents of engagement are thus right, there are some elements of this in the current and sought after situation for Sino-Indian relations. IR liberalism–functionalism, with its stress on state cooperation, internationalism, regionalism and shared economic interests, is something perhaps also developing, albeit haltingly, between these two neighbors. It should not be ignored that government rhetoric on both sides currently stresses cooperative dynamics, and increasing trade, whilst there are some shared interest like combating piracy on the high seas, Islamist *jihadi* ‘terrorists’ and so forth. India’s bilateral relationship with China could be a win–win situation of mutual advantage to both countries. The *Shared Vision for the 21st Century*, signed during Manmohan Singh’s visit to China in January 2008, reflects such a sense of mutual simultaneous noncombative rising; “the two sides are convinced that it is time to look to the future in building a relationship of friendship and trust, based on equality, in which each is sensitive to the concerns and aspirations of the other.”<sup>153</sup> Replete with positive and optimistic language for the future, the *Shared Vision for the 21st Century* was quickly seen by some Indian commentators as “a clear signal to the rest of the world . . . that their [China and India] economic and demographic clout would play a decisive role in shaping the 21st century.”<sup>154</sup>

Moves toward some military cooperation, seen at a very preliminary stage with small naval exercises in 2003, 2005 and land exercises in 2007, may develop more momentum in the future; in line with the Sino-Indian MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) on defense cooperation signed in 2006. Kondapalli’s sense was that “given the hardening [territorial] positions on both sides, these [joint military exercises] could offer short-to-medium term solace as both sides re-invent each other for the 21st Century dynamics in Asia and beyond.”<sup>155</sup> Strategic cooperation to facilitate global multipolarity is one line of future convergence. The signing of the *India-China Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity* in 2005 was a step forward. However, this has remained more of a paper exercise. Various regional forums like South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), and the East Asia Summit (EAS) have at times been an arena reflecting rivalry rather than IR liberalism–functionalism cooperation.<sup>156</sup> Indian commentators admit that amid general rhetoric of potential cooperation, there remains unspoken problems, “the 800-pound gorilla in the drawing room, so to speak, is the boundary dispute that is yet to be resolved.”<sup>157</sup> However, from the outside, resolution of their border issue seems possible, through India accepting Chinese control of the Aksai Chin in the west and China accepting Indian control of Arunachal Pradesh in the east. Longer term energy cooperation is feasible, even though minimal, hesitant and undermined by evident competition in the short term. Talk of China–India economic convergence and interdependence reflects some real trends. The “Chindian vision” in what is being envisaged as the Asian century is a potent symbol for Sino-Indian ties.<sup>158</sup>

Nevertheless, such engagement needs to be put into context. The 2008 *Shared Vision for the 21st Century* could be seen by some Indian commentators like Raman as “hype” in which unresolved territorial “core concerns persist”; for Kapila as “just an exercise in rhetorical jugglery”; and for Raghavan as “a candy floss of bloated sugar-coated verbiage that, let us face it, makes little difference to *realpolitik* as practised by countries.”<sup>159</sup> Sino-Indian bilateral engagement has not progressed very far in tangible

terms, apart from trade. It remains overshadowed by the much more noticeable security convergence seen with India's strategic partnerships announced with Australia, Japan, and above all the US. It remains true that whilst "India's foreign policy has consistently focused on balancing China . . . there exists a curious dichotomy between increasing economic interaction while simultaneously maintaining strategic distance between India and China"; in which "it is unclear whether economic partnerships will nurture relationships or whether strategic suspicions will deter positive interaction."<sup>160</sup>

Such strategic suspicions mean that in India's foreign policy is not just engagement with China; it also involves elements of multilateral constraint of China, of balancing with others against China, of making sure that China does not assert a Sinocentric unipolar regional order in the Asia-Pacific. Indian strategy toward China is then neither straight engagement, nor straight containment; it has elements of both, and can be termed *congame*. What follows is "India's imperatives for an active hedging strategy against China," a *hedging* strategy that hopes for the best in the shape of a cooperative friendly China, but prepares for the worst.<sup>161</sup> China's strategy toward India is based on maintaining a peaceful environment within which to achieve peaceful rise and full modernization by mid century; but in the meantime trying to avoid India aligning against itself, and give enough incentives for India to balance against US unipolar hegemony. The only trouble is that from India's perspective, China represents the more tangible potential/actual threat to India. Ultimately, "the odds are that in the contest for the strategic affections of India, it is the United States that will emerge as the preferred choice, rather than the PRC."<sup>162</sup>

There remains a problem of image and perceptions between the two countries. Conflictual and adversarial tendencies could perhaps be moderated through dialogue at various levels; people to people, academic to academic, business to business, military to military, government to government. Meanwhile, geopolitical location and the inherent "intractable" challenge of being neighboring regional powers will probably bring greater impinging and friction rather than a smoother relationship.<sup>163</sup> Application of IR liberalism-functionalism theory remains uncertain, since neither regional/international organizations, nor trade will necessarily generate particularly strong positive ties between India and China. Any democratization in China will probably benefit Sino-Indian relations in the longer run, in line with the IR democracy = peace linkage, though populist Han nationalism could muffle any such democracy dividend in the shorter term. In theory, an Asian security system based on cooperation between China, India and Japan could emerge, but as yet there is little tangible sign of this emerging. If anything, in security terms, the region looks more split between divergent Russia-China and US-Japan groupings, with India cooperating more with the latter. Nevertheless, the East Asia Summit in 2005, in which China and India were leading participants, may lead to the formation of a genuine East Asia Community within which India and China cooperate.

Finally, reflecting a bedrock of IR realism imperatives, some competition between India and China is likely to continue within regional organizations, in the diplomatic arena, within their military and economic strategies; and with it their elements of mutual balancing, and above all hedging. However, neither state will want to antagonize the other too much, both will want to maintain their own long term grand strategies of peaceful rise and economic modernization, neither will want to be taken for granted

by the other or by other third parties, both will approach each other with increasing caution and care. Time will tell, literally and strategically, how they will use their power toward each other, once their mutual rises are completed around 2030/40. The future beckons.

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