

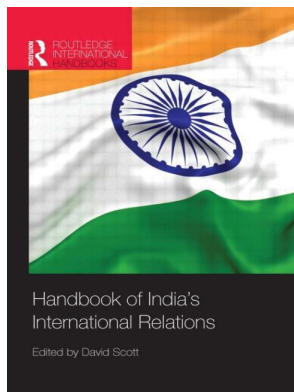
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India's relations with China

Harsh V. Pant

Introduction

According to most political observers, the global political architecture is undergoing a transformation, with power increasingly shifting from the West to the East, in what has been called the 'Asian Century'. The two most populous nations on the earth, the People's Republic of China and India, are on their way to becoming economic powerhouses and are shedding their reticence in asserting their global profiles, all of which makes their relationship of still greater importance to the international system. The future of this Asian Century will to a large extent depend upon the relationship between the two regional giants, China and India, and the bilateral relationship between China and India will define the contours of the new international political architecture in Asia and the world at large. The importance of their relationship has not been lost on China and India. In one of his meetings with the Indian Prime Minister, at the 2004 Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao, was reported to have remarked that 'when we shake hands, the whole world will be watching'. As of today, however, the trajectory of the Sino-Indian relationship remains as complex as ever to decipher, despite some positive developments in the last few years. This chapter examines the evolution of Sino-Indian ties over the last few decades and the constraints that continue to inhibit this relationship from achieving its full potential.

Initial encounters

As two ancient civilizations, India and China have had cultural and trade ties since at least the first century. The famous Silk Road allowed for economic and trade ties to develop between the two, with the transmission of Buddhism from India to China giving a further cultural dimension to the relationship between the two neighbours. The political ties between China and India, however, remained underdeveloped.

Independent India's first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, saw anti-imperialist friendship between the two largest states of Asia as imperative if interference by the two external super-powers was to be avoided.¹ Solidarity with China was integral to Nehru's vision of Asian

leadership. After the People's Republic of China was established in 1949, and India established diplomatic ties with it in 1950, India not only advocated China's membership at the UN but also opposed attempts to condemn China for its actions in Korea. Yet the issue of Tibet soon emerged as the major bone of contention between China and India. China was suspicious of Indian designs on Tibet, which India sought to allay by supporting the Seventeen-Point Agreement between Tibetan delegates and China in 1951, which recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet and guaranteed the existing socio-political arrangements of Tibet. India and China signed the famed Panchshila agreement in 1954, which underlined the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence as forming the basis of their bilateral relationship.² These principles included mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful co-existence. These were the heydays of Sino-Indian ties, with the *Hindi-China bhai-bhai* ('the Indians and Chinese are brothers') phrase a favourite slogan for the seeming camaraderie between the two states.

However, this was not to last for long. Soon the border dispute between China and India escalated and led to the 1962 Sino-Indian war.³ Though a short war, it was to have a long-lasting impact on Sino-Indian ties. It demolished Nehru's claims of Asian solidarity, and the defeat at the hands of the Chinese psychologically scarred the Indian military and political elites. It led to China developing close ties with India's neighbouring adversary, Pakistan, resulting in what is now widely considered an 'all-weather' friendship. China supported Pakistan in its 1965 and 1971 wars against India and helped in the development of its nuclear weapons arsenal. Meanwhile, the Indian nuclear weapons programme was accelerated in light of China's testing of nuclear weapons in 1964.

The border issue continues to be a major obstacle in Sino-Indian ties, with minor skirmishes at the border continuing since 1962. As China and the USA came closer after their rapprochement in 1972, India gravitated to the USSR to balance the Sino-US-Pakistani axis. It was in 1988 that the then Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, turned over a new leaf in Sino-Indian ties, when he went to Beijing and signed an agreement that aimed to achieve a 'fair and reasonable settlement while seeking a mutually acceptable solution to the border dispute'.⁴ The visit saw a Joint Working Group (JWG) set up to explore the boundary issue and examine probable solutions to the problem.

However, bilateral relations between India and China touched their nadir in the immediate aftermath of India's nuclear tests in May 1998. China had been singled out as the 'number one' security threat for India by India's defence minister just before the nuclear tests.⁵ After the tests the Indian Prime Minister wrote to the US President justifying Indian nuclear tests as a response to the threat posed by China:

We have an overt nuclear weapon state [China] on our borders, a state which 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.⁶

Not surprisingly, China reacted strongly, with diplomatic relations between the two countries plummeting to an all-time low.

However, after more than a decade, relations between the two countries, at least superficially, seem to be on a much firmer footing, as they have tried to reduce the prospect for rivalry and expand areas of co-operation. The visit of the Indian Minister of External Affairs to

China in 1999 marked the resumption of high-level dialogue, as the two sides declared that they were not a threat to each other. A bilateral security dialogue was also initiated, which has helped the two countries to openly express and share their security concerns with each other. Both China and India continue to emphasize that neither side should let differences act as an impediment to the growth of functional co-operation elsewhere between the two states. India and China also decided to expedite the process of demarcation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and the JWG on the boundary question, set up in 1988, has been meeting regularly. As a first step in this direction the two countries exchanged border maps on the least controversial Middle Sector of the LAC. More recently, both nations agreed Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question (2005), broad principles to govern the parameters of any dispute settlement. China has expressed its desire to seek a 'fair' resolution to the vexed boundary issue on the basis of 'mutual accommodation, respect for history, and accommodation of reality'.⁷

Diplomacy of declarations

Former Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited China in June 2003, the first visit by an Indian premier in a decade. The Joint Declaration signed during this visit expressed the view that China was not a threat to India.⁸ The two states appointed Special Representatives in order to impart momentum to border negotiations that have lasted now for more than 20 years, with the Prime Minister's principal secretary becoming India's political-level negotiator, replacing the India-China JWG. India and China also decided to hold their first joint naval and air exercises. More significantly, India acknowledged China's sovereignty over Tibet and pledged not to allow 'anti-China' political activities in India. For its part, China seemed to have finally acknowledged India's 1975 incorporation of the former monarchy of Sikkim, by agreeing to open a trading post along the border with the former kingdom and later by rectifying its official maps to include Sikkim as part of India.⁹ After being closed for 60 years, the Nathu La pass, a traditional trading post between Tibet and Sikkim, was reopened in 2006. High-level political interactions have continued unabated since then. The two states have set up institutionalized defence consultation mechanisms to reduce suspicion and indentify areas of co-operation on security issues.

Soon after assuming office, the Manmohan Singh Government made it clear that it was for closer ties with China and would continue to work towards improving bilateral relations with the country. India's former national security adviser, J.N. Dixit, wrote that 'the Congress will continue the process of normalizing, strengthening and expanding India's relations with China, which is the most important factor affecting Asian security and stability'.¹⁰ In his first address to the nation, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh also emphasized the carrying forward of the process of further development and diversification of Sino-Indian relations.¹¹

When Singh visited China in 2008, the two states signed a Shared Visions on the 21st Century declaration, 'to promote the building of a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity through developing the Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity between the two countries'.¹² Support for the earlier Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the China-India Boundary Question (2005) was reiterated. The two sides have decided to elevate the boundary negotiations to the level of a strategic dialogue, with plans for a hotline between the Indian Prime Minister and the Chinese Premier as a means to remove misunderstanding and reduce tensions at the earliest opportunity. Their public vision suggested that this relationship would have 'a positive influence on the future of the international system'.¹³

The global structural imperative

At this international system level, India and China have found some real convergence of interests. Both share similar concerns about the international dominance of the USA, the threat of fundamentalist religious and ethnic movements in the form of terrorism, and the need to accord primacy to economic development. India and China have both expressed concern about the USA's use of military power around the world, and both were publicly opposed to the war in Iraq. This was merely a continuation of the desire of both states to oppose US hyperpuissance ever since the end of the Cold War.

Both China and India, much like other major powers in the international system, favour a multipolar world order wherein US unipolarity remains constrained by the other 'poles' in the system. China and India zealously guard their national sovereignty and have been wary of US attempts to interfere in what they see as domestic affairs of other states, be it Serbia, Kosovo or Iraq. Both took strong exception to the US air strikes on Iraq in 1998, the US-led air campaign against Yugoslavia in 1999, and more recently the US campaign against Saddam Hussain; both India and China argued that these violated the sovereignty of both countries and undermined the authority of the UN system. China and India share an interest in resisting interventionist foreign policy doctrines emanating from the West, particularly the USA, and display conservative attitudes on the prerogatives of sovereignty.

China and India have co-ordinated their efforts on issues as wide ranging as climate change, trade negotiations, energy security and the global financial crisis. Both nations favour more democratic international economic regimes. It is being argued that the forces of globalization have led to a certain convergence of Sino-Indian interests in the economic realm, as the two nations become even more deeply engaged in the international trading economy and more integrated in global financial networks.¹⁴ They have strongly resisted efforts by the USA and other developed nations to link global trade to labour and environmental standards, realizing clearly that this would put them at a huge disadvantage vis-à-vis the developed world, thereby hampering their drive towards economic development, the number one priority for both countries. Both have committed themselves to crafting joint Sino-Indian positions in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and global trade negotiations in the hope that this might provide them with greater negotiating leverage over other developed states. They would like to see further liberalization of agricultural trade in the developed countries, to tighten the rules on anti-dumping measures and ensure that non-trade-related issues such as labour and the environment are not allowed to come into the WTO. Both have fought carbon emission caps proposed by the industrialized world and have resisted Western pressure to open up their agricultural markets.

The attempt by India and China in recent years has been to build their bilateral relationship on the basis of their larger world view of international politics. As they have found a distinct convergence of their interests on the world stage, they have used it to strengthen their bilateral relations. They have established and maintained regular reciprocal high-level visits between political leaders. There has been a real attempt to improve trade relations and to compartmentalize intractable issues that make it difficult for their bilateral relationship to move forward.

India and China have strengthened their bilateral relationship in areas as distinct as cultural and educational exchanges, military exchanges, and science and technology co-operation. Some military co-operation, something unthinkable a few years back, now takes place, with Indian and Chinese militaries conducting joint exercises. Economic relations between the two have been burgeoning, with China now India's largest trading partner. It was former Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji who suggested that the combination of Chinese hardware and Indian

software would be irresistible to the global market. Bilateral trade has recorded rapid growth from a trade volume of US \$265m. in 1991 to \$42,440m. in 2009/10, or 9.1% of India's overall trade—45,950m. and an 11.8% share if Hong Kong is included. Its pace continues to accelerate, with India-China bilateral trade reaching \$32,000m. in the first half of 2010. In addition to trade and interaction in the information technology sector, India facilitates China's economic development by exporting raw materials and semi-finished goods, as well as shipping Chinese cargo overseas. Chinese companies, for their part, have just begun to tap into India's ever-expanding consumer market by exporting electrical machines, home appliances, consumer electronics and mechanical goods. The two nations are also evaluating the possibility of signing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement and a Free Trade Agreement, thereby building on strong complementarities between the two economies.

The number one priority for China's leadership today is economic growth and social stability. China's focus is going to be on maintaining its high rates of economic growth in coming years. China's political leadership is a product of the 'evolutionary policies' of Deng Xiaoping, which emphasize economic growth and orderly governance. China can be expected to continue on its current economic trajectory and to shape its foreign policy accordingly. India's focus is also on economic development at present, though its democratic political institutional structure ensures that consensus will elude India on the desirable route to economic development and modernization.

Global co-ordination and bilateral tensions

At the global level, the rhetoric is all about co-operation and, indeed, the two sides have worked together on climate change and global trade negotiations and in demanding a restructuring of global financial institutions in view of the global economy's shifting centre of gravity.

At the bilateral level, however, ties deteriorated to such an extent in 2009 that China took its territorial dispute with India all the way to the Asian Development Bank, where it blocked an application by India for a loan that included development projects in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, which China continues to claim as part of its own territory. Buoyed by the perception that the Administration of US President Barack Obama plans to make its ties with China the centrepiece of its foreign policy in light of growing US economic dependence on China, China has displayed a distinctly more aggressive stance vis-à-vis India. China's lack of support for the US-Indian civilian nuclear energy co-operation pact, which it tried to block at the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and its obstructionist stance to bringing those behind the November 2009 terrorist attack in Mumbai to justice have further strained ties.¹⁵

Sino-Indian frictions are growing and potential for conflict remains high. There is rising alarm in India because of frequent and strident claims being made by China along the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. Indians have complained that there has been a dramatic rise in Chinese cross-border 'intrusions' into the Indian territory over the last two years, most of them along the border in the region of Arunachal Pradesh, the Indian state that China refers to as *Zangnan* 'Southern Tibet'. China has upped the ante on the border issue. It has been regularly protesting against the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh in 2009, asserting its claims over the territory. What has caught most observers of Sino-Indian ties by surprise is the vehemence with which Beijing has contested every single recent Indian administrative and political action in the state, even denying visas to Indian citizens of Arunachal Pradesh. India's Minister of External Affairs was forced to go on the record that the Chinese Army 'sometimes' intrudes on its territory, though he added that the issues were being addressed through established mechanisms. The recent rounds of boundary negotiations have been a disappointing

failure, with a growing perception in India that China is less than willing to adhere to earlier political understandings on how to address the boundary dispute. Even the rhetoric has degenerated to the extent that a Chinese analyst connected to China's Ministry of National Defence claimed in a 2009 article that China could 'dismember the so-called "Indian Union" with one little move' into as many as 30 fragments.¹⁶

The fundamental underpinnings of the Sino-Indian bilateral relationship remain highly uncertain. China has tried hard to maintain a rough 'balance of power' in South Asia by preventing India from gaining an upper hand over Pakistan. China has consistently assisted Pakistan's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes to counterbalance India's development of new weapons systems. India's preoccupation with Pakistan reduces India to the level of a regional power, while China can claim the status of an Asian and world power. It is instructive to note that even as India and China share similar concerns regarding Islamist terrorism in Kashmir and Xinjiang, respectively, China has been rather unwilling to make a common cause with India against Pakistan.

China's rapid economic growth in the last decade has given it the capability to transform itself into a military power. Its rapidly modernizing military is a cause of great concern for India. China's military may or may not be able to take on the USA in the next few years, but it will surely become the most dominant force in Asia. India is concerned about the opacity that seems to surround China's military build-up, with an emerging consensus that Beijing's real military spending is at least double the announced figure. The official figures of the Chinese Government do not include the cost of new weapons purchases, research or other big-ticket items for China's highly secretive military and, as a result, the real figure may be much higher than the revealed amount. Whatever Chinese intentions might be, consistent increases in defence budgets over the last several years have put China on track to become a major military power and the power most capable of challenging US predominance in the Asia-Pacific. While China's near-term focus remains on preparations for potential problems in the Taiwan Strait, its nuclear force modernization, its growing arsenal of advanced missiles, and its development of space and cyberspace technologies are changing the military balance in Asia and beyond. As China becomes more reliant on imported oil for its rapidly growing industrial economy, it will develop and exercise military power projection capabilities to protect the shipping that transports oil from the Persian Gulf to China. The capability to project power would require access to advanced naval bases along the sea lines of communication, and forces capable of gaining and sustaining naval and air superiority.

China's assistance to Myanmar in constructing and improving port facilities on two Cocos islands in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea may well be the first step to securing military base privileges in the Indian Ocean, potential listening posts for gathering intelligence on Indian naval operations, and a forward base for future Chinese naval operations in the Indian Ocean.¹⁷ China's increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean is occurring at the same time as Indian naval expansion has relatively slowed.¹⁸ This could have great strategic consequences, because India's traditional geographic advantages in the Indian Ocean are increasingly at risk with any deepening Chinese involvement in Myanmar.

China has also been actively occupying islands, reefs and islets throughout the highly disputed South China Sea, occasionally resulting in skirmishes with rival claimants in the region. Interestingly, the Indian Navy has also been regularly deploying in the South China Sea since 2000. Moreover, China blocked India's membership in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) organization, and India became a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum (ARF) despite China's opposition. China has been non-committal on India's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and has

obliquely warned against India's military presence in Central Asia. It was again China that drafted the condemnatory UN Security Council Resolution 1172 after India's nuclear tests in 1998.

For its part, India seems to have lost the battle over Tibet to China, despite the fact that Tibet constitutes China's only truly fundamental vulnerability vis-à-vis India. India has failed to limit China's military use of Tibet despite its great implications for Indian security, even as Tibet has become a platform for the projection of Chinese military power.¹⁹ India's tacit support of the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile has failed to have much of an impact either on China or on the international community. By 2010 even the Dalai Lama seemed ready to talk to the Chinese, probably because he realized that in a few years Tibet might be overwhelmed with the Han 'Chinese' population and Tibetans themselves might become a minority in their own land.

Conversely, reports of Chinese intrusion across the Sino-Indian border appear time and again, especially across the eastern sector of the LAC in Arunachal Pradesh, with China continuing to lay claim to 90,000 sq miles of land in Arunachal Pradesh and not recognizing Arunachal Pradesh as part of Indian territory.²⁰ The opening up of the Nathu La trade route that connects Tibet and Sikkim was also fraught with dangers, because there were concerns that threats to the internal security of India posed by China could get worse with this opening. Moreover, the hopes of high trade flows through Nathu La have proved to be meagre trickles instead. India-China trade is overwhelmingly conducted via the sea, and is trade in which there has been a growing disadvantage for India in the past decade. A trade deficit for India with China of just over \$4,100m. in 2005/06 had become a trade deficit of just over \$19,200m. in 2009/10, in which China's exports to India of \$30,824m. overshadowed India's much smaller exports to China of \$11,617m.

Meanwhile, even though China has solved most of its border disputes with other countries, it is reluctant to move ahead with India on border issues. No results of any substance have been forthcoming from the Sino-Indian border negotiations even as the talks continue endlessly and the momentum of the talks itself seems to have flagged. So far, only the maps of the Middle Sector of the LAC, the least controversial part of the boundary, have been exchanged, and those, too, yet require confirmation. China has adopted shifting positions on the border issue, which might be a well-thought out position to keep India in a perpetual state of uncertainty. In the Indian context, China is ready for an early settlement of the border dispute *if* India concedes strategic territory. China's claims along the LAC also seem to be growing and may, therefore, indicate the reluctance so far to exchange maps on the western (Aksai Chin) and eastern (Arunachal Pradesh) sectors. With China controlling about 35,000 sq km of territory in Aksai Chin in the western sector and laying claim to almost all the 90,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern sector, no early resolution of the boundary dispute is in sight. For its part, China sees a close Indo-US relationship as an attempt by the USA to encircle China, especially as it comes along with increasing US military presence and influence in Central and South Asia after the terrorist attacks on the USA on 11 September 2001. China has reacted strongly against the idea of a 'democratic quad' consisting of India, Japan, Australia and the USA, as manifested in their joint military exercises in the Bay of Bengal in September 2007.

India's growing challenge

India's challenge remains formidable. It has not yet achieved the economic and political profile that China enjoys regionally and globally, but it is increasingly bracketed with China as a rising power, emerging power or even a global superpower. The Indian elite, who have been obsessed with Pakistan for more than 60 years, have found suddenly a new object of fascination.

India's main security concern now is not the increasingly decrepit state of Pakistan but an ever more assertive China, which is widely viewed in India as having a better ability for strategic planning. The defeat at the hands of the Chinese in 1962 has psychologically scarred the elite perceptions of China and they are unlikely to change in the near future. China is viewed by India as a growing, aggressive nationalistic power, the ambitions of which are likely to reshape the contours of regional and global balance of power with deleterious consequences for Indian interests.²¹ Whilst Indian policy-makers continue to believe that Beijing is not a short-term threat to India, they believe it needs to be watched over the long term, with Indian defence officials increasingly warning in rather blunt terms about the disparity between the two Asian powers. India has been warned by its former Naval Chief that the country neither has 'the capability nor the intention to match China force for force' in military terms, while the former Air Chief has suggested that China posed more of a threat to India than Pakistan.²²

It may well be that the hardening of the Chinese posture toward India has been a function of its own sense of internal vulnerability, but that is hardly a consolation to Indian policy-makers who have to respond to Indian public opinion that increasingly wants the nation to assert itself in the region and beyond. India is rather belatedly gearing up to respond with its own diplomatic and military overtures, setting the stage for Sino-Indian strategic rivalry.

The rise of China is a major factor in the evolution of Indo-Japanese ties, as is the USA's attempt to build India into a major balancer in the region. Both India and Japan are well aware of China's not-so-subtle attempts at preventing their rise. It is most clearly reflected in China's opposition to the expansion of the UN Security Council to include India and Japan as permanent members. China's status as a Permanent Member of the Security Council and as a nuclear weapons state is something that it would be loath to share with any other state in Asia. India's 'Look East' policy of active engagement with ASEAN and East Asia remains largely predicated upon Japanese support, whilst generating Chinese ambivalence. India's participation in the East Asia Summit was facilitated by Japan, but initially resisted by China. While China has resisted the inclusion of India, Australia and New Zealand in ASEAN, Japan has strongly backed the entry of all three nations.

Recent convergence in the strategic priorities of India and the USA, as well as Japan, notwithstanding, it is unlikely that India would openly become a part of the US-led alliance framework against China. Like most states in the Asia-Pacific, India would not want to antagonize China by ganging up against it. Yet India is the country that will be and already is most affected by a rising China. China is a rising power in Asia and the world and as such will do its utmost to prevent the rise of other power centres around its periphery, like India, which might in the future prevent it from taking its rightful place as a global player. China's 'all-weather friendship' with Pakistan, its attempts to increase its influence in Nepal, Bangladesh and Myanmar, its persistent refusal to recognize parts of India such as Arunachal Pradesh, its lack of support for India's membership of the UN Security Council and other regional and global organizations, and its unwillingness to support the US-India nuclear pact—all these point towards China's attempts at preventing the rise of India as a regional and global player of major import. With India's recent rise as an economic and political power of global significance, Sino-Indian ties are now at a critical juncture, with India trying to find the right policy mix to deal with its most important neighbour.

The Sino-Indian security dilemma

The two sides are locked in a classic International Relations (IR) *security dilemma*, whereby any action taken by one is immediately interpreted by the other as a threat to its own interests.²³

China has always viewed India as a mere regional player and has tried to confine India to the periphery of global politics. It was being argued a few years back that India was not on China's radar, as the country had set its eyes much higher. Today, the rise of India poses a challenge to China in more ways than one—the most important being ideological. The success of the Indian developmental model poses a significant challenge for the Chinese regime. As the story of India's success is being celebrated across the world, especially in the West, it is no surprise to see China becoming edgier in its relationship with India. It is notable that only after the USA started courting India did Chinese rhetoric towards India undergo a slight modification. Realizing that a close US-Indian partnership would change the regional balance of power to its disadvantage, China has started tightening the screws on India. It has further entrenched itself in India's *immediate neighbourhood* of South Asia, even as Sino-Indian competition for energy resources has gained momentum around India's *extended neighbourhood* and beyond. The development of infrastructure by China in its border regions with India has been so rapid and effective, and Indian response so lackadaisical, that the Indian member of parliament from Arunachal Pradesh was forced to suggest in sheer exasperation that the Government should allow Arunachal Pradesh to get a rail link from China, as even 60 years after independence India has failed to connect his state with the nation's mainland. India, in response, is now trying to catch up with China by improving the infrastructure on its side of the border areas. It has deployed two additional army divisions, and heavy tanks, and has ramped up its air power in the region, which is a bone of contention between India and China. Amidst such military build-ups and forward deployments on land and at sea, tensions are inherent.²⁴ Unless managed carefully, the potential for such incidents turning serious in the future remains high.

Conclusions

Both China and India are rising at the same time in an Asia-Pacific strategic landscape that is in flux. India is still 'grappling with an uneasy relationship' vis-à-vis China, amidst their simultaneous ascent in the global inter-state hierarchy and in mostly the same region of the world.²⁵ Even as they sign documents with high-sounding words year after year, the distrust between the two is actually growing at an alarming rate. Economic co-operation and bilateral political as well as socio-cultural exchanges are at an all-time high, yet this has done little to assuage their concerns vis-à-vis each other's intentions. Despite the rhetoric of a new phase in the relationship, the problems between India and China are substantial and complicated, with no easy resolution in sight. India and China are two major powers in Asia with global aspirations and some significant conflicting interests. The geopolitical reality of Asia ensures that it will be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for *Hind-China* ('Indians and Chinese') to be *bhai-bhai* (brothers) in the foreseeable future.

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