

INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS: THE “MO-XI” DYNAMIC

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CHANGING GEOPOLITICS

The Asian region has been the economic engine for growth of the component nations and their neighborhood adding wealth and quality to human lives for several decades. In fact, economic engagements have truly deferred disputes in both time and space. While component countries found it inspiring to address the basic needs and well being of their people, China's well-known disputes with almost every neighbour found means and ways of settlement partially or wholly. In many ways the entire region has witnessed a dilution in the traditional identities of South Asia, South East Asia and East Asia with boundaries and neighborhoods being traded for growth and economic benefit.....[CLICK HERE TO READ MORE](#)

The sudden and unexpected turn round in the dynamics of engagement in this region have challenged virtually every single factor that sustained these bonds for many years. In fact, never before have territorial claims and counterclaims hypersensitized this region to this level of conflict situations as now.

China's steady rise and evolution into an economic giant after its independence had focused on its objectives. The military strength and economic growth transformed its strength into preeminence over the following years, bringing her into conflict with not just its neighbors but extra regional players as well.

China's President Xi Jinping's visit comes at a critical point in time that may well be the cross roads of change for regional and global dynamics.

While trade on one hand has grown exponentially, border turbulence has significantly increased. For the first time, the two nations are represented by leaders who have the political will and dynamism to understand each other's challenges between dreams and aspirations, amidst an increasingly complex environment.

India's growing relevance and clout with regional and global partners-in her ability to rebalance regional turbulence- has forged a new perception. However, India's inability to settle territorial disputes over Arunachal Pradesh is also a major concern that needs to find the right place in the table for resolution.

The setting out perspectives of both sides appear to be significantly divergent, but if aptly handled, the meeting can be truly historic.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

THE XI FACTOR

The most significant and singular recent event in China has been President Xi Jinping's great Chinese Dream through which he envisions "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation", an economically and militarily strong China in a time frame of 2023.

Xi's Concept of "Chinese Dream" is directly related to the old Confucian concept of the "Middle Kingdom" to restore China to its former glory of more than 5,000 years of proud civilisation which it had lost after more than 200 years of foreign rule and oppression starting in 1750's. At this time, China was at the centre of the world affairs and different countries paid homage to it.

With concentration of political, military and economic power in his hands in a short span of 12 months, it is evident that Xi Jinping has assumed the overarching responsibility to lead his country into the new decade. As best proclaimed in his own words, this concept induces a complex dynamic of **strong military** for revival of a strong China, with significant ramifications.

However, the internal dynamics of China are not unknown to the world, the statistics and vulnerabilities are known. Governance, freedom and poverty are values that make most Chinese dreams.

Xi thus, will be the first Chinese leader to square up an equilibrium between his dreams for China and those of his people, as also facilitate redrawing contours of relations with India.

THE MODI FACTOR

The epic rise of Prime Minister Modi is unprecedented in time and dimension. Dynamic, dedicated and determined, he arrives as a ray of hope in the lives of a billion Indians, a paradigm shift, brought in by a democratic change by the people for the people.

His promise is to build a nation that is strong, prosperous and inclusive, where each and every Indian can realize their hopes and aspirations. He is a 'people's leader', dedicated to improving their well-being.

Narendra Modi's focus is on the need for an effective foreign policy that enables stability and security in the country. Hence, international engagements by India in just the last three months have witnessed unprecedented, or perhaps even historic outcomes.

The Obama Administration sees an India that is of great strategic significance and can act as a stabilising force in the entire Asia Pacific region. The British Deputy Prime Minister Clegg conveyed UK's strong desire to further strengthen and deepen relations with India, and support the ambitious goal of Indian's economic and social transformation.

Modi's elevation of India-Japan ties from a "strategic and global partnership" to a "special strategic and global partnership" signifies Japan's increasing role in India's economic development, increased political dialogue and new thrust to defence ties among other issues.

The Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott in his statement in Melbourne, on the eve of India's Independence Day, praised the country's contributions to the world, saying: "India is growing from strength to strength and no one should underestimate India now nor its potential to be a global superpower in this century."

Closer home, PM Modi's resounding impact has been phenomenal. The presence of leaders of the members of the SAARC countries was a first for a Prime Ministerial inauguration, and that spell volumes of his inspiration and confidence. Modi has a dream for India and for the global community for peace, prosperity and stability.

THE CURRENT ENGAGEMENT

President Xi Jinping's personal communique of 17 September is perhaps the first-ever effort in perusing China's relations with a major nation. The communique addressed key areas, such as China's commitment to realising their dream of great national renewal; the opening of China's markets to India's IT and Pharma sector; and Beijing's expectations to push its new generation APC 1000 nuclear reactors. It also mentioned that

the development of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road to boost trade and commerce in South-East Asia and Indian Ocean nations as well as the BCIM economic corridor were essential and that no genuine Asian Century was possible without the development of China and India.

In their first-ever meeting of this magnitude and strategic engagement between two major nations, Xi has chosen to deliberately omit any reference to territorial and border dispute except just recounting past efforts between the two nations. This is significantly undermining the importance of this issue in normalizing relations between the two countries.

Comments of Chinese foreign ministry's spokesman, Hong Lei, that the boundary dispute does not influence bilateral ties, and that China and India could stand by each other to accelerate the process of joint and common development clearly signalled keeping out the border dispute from this meeting. Clubbing China and India as "World's Factory and Global Back Office" towards maximizing potential has overtones of under playing India in comparison.

Continued incidents on the border coinciding with all major visits between India and China, including the ongoing skirmish of five days reflects a discernible expression of the pending boundary dispute.

China's disapproval of India's President's visit to Vietnam and concern over PM Modi's reference to expansionist powers and territorial ambitions during his visit to Japan may be contributory factors. Development of the Maritime Silk Route and the BCIM economic corridors are distinctly advantage China vis-à-vis India, as both facilitate a strategic outreach into the Indian Ocean region.

PM Modi's "Inch Towards Miles" approach is unique in its expression and intent. His caution that strong relations can only emerge by following the principle of mutual and equal security and showing mutual sensitivity to each other's concerns and aspirations is significant. His reiteration of need of a climate of peace, stability, mutual trust and respect than just physical connectivity in context of restoring traditional trade routes is clear in his perspective of hope.

REASSERTING INDIA'S CONCERNS

This is a first match of strong leaderships, a match that can lead to cooperation and strategic outcomes of an unprecedented order between the two nations as also prosecuting a responsible role together towards greater stability and prosperity in the region.

Within this spirit and commitment, India must seek respect for its concern of territorial integrity in the same spirit as that of China's pursuit of its sovereignty. Settlement of border disputes must be reviewed and addressed in the current engagement than be lost in a response of appeasement.

Any attempt by China to delink economic and trade cooperation from security issues has to be viewed critically. In the long run, trade must have potential for resolution of territorial disputes. Correct posturing under the new government backed by political comprehension, clarity and will can strengthen our traditionally weak security and defence stand. For this, only pragmatism in options for negotiations will ensure driving security by its needs than expectations out of ambiguity as done repeatedly over the last five decades.

Acknowledgement of India as an emerging force for stability and strategic relevance by the international community and the critical neighbourhood countries, must be a major factor in this state of play. India's alliances or engagements with other partners can be diligently optimised to mutual gain without risking / staking interests of any of its partners. India has to be resolute and steadfast in its strength and conscious of her vulnerabilities.

China's perspective of Asian Prosperity in the 21st century without due regard to sustainable security between the two nations may be far from a viable option. For this, India's security perspective needs redefinition and greater clarity, an option we may have deliberately/traditionally avoided hither to fore.

The territorial dispute must be discussed and deliberated upon at length to evolve options for forward movement. With the much needed comprehension and resolve to drive mutual concerns, the "MoXi" dynamic can truly rebalance the India China engagement towards greater stability and prosperity. 