

“An Analysis of the Sino Indian Territorial Dispute”

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Abstract: - This Paper gives us information about the Sino-Indian Border Issues Particularly Sino Indian Tibet Issue 1959, Aksai Chin.etc. The Sino Indian Interactions Pre 1962 Border Skirmish between the two Asian Giants has also been elaborated in this work.

Keywords:-China, India, Disputes, skirmishes, United Nations.

Introduction:-

India—China relations have undergone dramatic changes over the past five decades, ranging from the 1950's with a deep hostility in the 1960,s and 1970,s to a rapprochement in the 1980's and a readjustment since the demise of Soviet Union. The post-cold war era has offered enormous opportunities to New Delhi and Beijing to move in the direction of a productive relationship. Both countries have realized the imperative need for cooperation in diverse areas, especially in the trade and economic domains, in the long-term interest of peace and stability in Asia as well as for faster economic development and prosperity at home. During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003, leaders of both countries not only emphasized the categorical need to deepen economic, trade and strategic ties, but also the need to explore a feasible framework for an early settlement of border question, which has been a contentious issue for more than four decades. Realistically, the fast-changing economic and strategic milieu punctuated by uncertainty brought about by globalization in macrocosmic terms, has created challenges as well as opportunities for both India and China to free themselves of historical baggage in terms of bilateral relations. India and China are the two giants of Asia with the oldest and living civilization of the world. Sindhu and Ganges gave birth to Indian civilization, which influenced south and Southeast Asia. Similarly, Huanghe (Yellow River) and Changjiang (Yangtze River), The longest river of Asia; flows eastward from Tibet into the East China Sea near Shanghai) gave birth to the Chinese civilization, which on its part influenced northeast and Southeast Asia. Being neighbours India and China had established trade and International cultural relations since time immemorial. If one talks of thousands of years old Sino-Indian cultural interface then there must be a starting point for this. Here an attempt is made by not discussing the evolution by inference but to start from where onwards reliable historical records are available. It could be established from these records that Sino-Indian interface was always a two-way traffic and the two elements of this exchange could be categorized as material exchange and spiritual cultural exchange. This two-faceted exchange was carried through the following four routes of communication:

1. The Central Asian Route or the so-called Silk Route,
2. Assam-Burma and Yunnan Route or the famous Southern Silk Route,

3. Tibet Nepal Route, and

4. The Sea Route or the so-called Maritime Silk Rout (Huibian, 1994: 4-5) The Central Asian Route was the main overland route though this was not the earliest one to be discovered. This route was especially vital for the traders and missionaries from China to India and vice-versa. **1**

I have been deeply concerned at the deteriorating security environment, specially the nuclear environment, faced by India for some years past. We have an overt nuclear weapon state 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.

— Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, “Letter to President William J. Clinton”. **2**

China and India are the two most populous nations in the world. They are geographically separated by the highest mountain range of the world, the Himalayas. Despite this significant barrier, these two nations have sown seeds of deep mistrust in their bilateral relations. A study of relationships between India and China is important at this juncture in history, as both states have gained considerable strategic importance, not only regionally, but also globally. Any relationship adopted by these two countries influences regional and global peace and stability. Both countries are declared nuclear powers and possess booming economies. Although both the countries have been positive about each other in the international media, they view each other within a complex adversarial framework. Aspirations to become economic powers, to play a dominant role in the regional politics, and a greater desire for influence in the international arena highlight the clashing interests. Relations between India and China have been up and down since their independence in the late 1940s. Their relations reached the lowest ebb in the early 1960s, when a border dispute turned into a short-lived war in 1962. The Longju Incident in the eastern sector and the Kongka Pass in the western sector was a prelude to the all-out armed conflict on the border from 20 October to 21 November 1962.**3**

China as we know it today, or the People’s Republic of China (PRC), was formed in October 1949, a little more than two years after the creation of independent India. Though both nations have had cultural ties over millennia, the period after 1949 has seen distinct challenges in the age of nuclear, and with both countries accelerating development. With the nations being the two most populous, yet fastest growing economies in the world today, and China posing the closest challenge to United States of America (henceforth referred to as US) unipolarity in the world, the relations between the two countries are of extreme importance to the global order. In June 2012, China stated its position that "Sino-Indian ties" could be the most "important bilateral partnership of the century".**4**

Sino Indian Tibet Issue:-

Tibet impinges on Sino–Indian relations more than any of China’s other bilateral relations. As the late Dawa Norbu observed: ‘ The crux of the Sino–Indian strategic rivalry is this: if the Chinese power elite consider Tibet to be strategically important to China, the Indian counterparts think it is equally vital to Indian national security’ (Norbu 2001: 297). India’s Tibet policy was defined by Nehru’s dreams of a Sino–Indian anti-

imperialist and non-aligned alternative to the hegemonic Soviet and American superpowers. The 1962 border war with China changed India's practice, if not its policy, towards the Tibetan refugees. Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1989 brought about a thaw in relations and a return to India's pre-1962 policy statements on Tibet, although there have been no discernible practical fall-outs on the Tibetan exiles. This is, perhaps, in keeping with the new realism in post-Cold War India's foreign policy, tempering the 'idealism in its foreign policy with a strong dose of realism' (Chellaney 2006: 159–62; Mohan 2003: xiv–xv). Mohan writes, 'Facing its own acute vulnerabilities in Kashmir, Punjab and the North-East, India was unwilling to confront China on the Tibet issue. At the same time, India refused to bend by reducing or suspending its support to the Tibetan exiles and the Dalai Lama in India' (Mohan 2003: 169). Eventually though, as one Indian analyst counselled, India will need 'a more sophisticated policy that goes beyond simply curbing the Dalai Lama's activities', remaining in a state of denial, or regurgitating its acceptance of Tibet as a part of China (Stobdan 2009). This is because at some point Beijing will demand that India should dissolve the Tibetan government-in-exile. The up-shot is that Tibet remains a key irritant in India–China relations. There are four major issues that feed the Sino–Indian geo-strategic rivalry that have to do with Tibet: the status of Tibet, Chinese unease with the activities of Tibetan refugees, including the Dalai Lama, Indian fears over Chinese military presence on the Tibetan plateau and the long-standing border dispute (Chellaney 2006: 159–62, 189–94; Mohan 2003: 168–71; Norbu 2001: 283–97). First, India's position on the status of Tibet has changed from the British policy of recognising the de facto independence of Tibet—'completely Autonomous State'—under a vague form of Chinese suzerainty (1947–1951) (Foreign Office 1943; Goldstein 1989: 634) to accepting Tibet as a part of China in 1954 (Shakya 1999: 119). On April 29, 1954, India relented to the Chinese insistence on referring to Tibet as 'Tibet Region of China' Jain 1981f: 61–67, 77–80). After the 1962 border war, India often merely used 'Tibet' until the 1988 visit of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi when the 'Sino–Indian Joint Press Communique' referred to Tibet as 'an autonomous region of China' ('Sino–Indian Joint Press Communique', 23 December 1988). In the year 2003, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee signed a declaration which recognised 'that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China' ('Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India', 25 June 2003). This position was reiterated in the Joint Statement during the visit of Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India in 2005 ('Joint Statement of the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China', 11 April 2005). These formulations led an Indian scholar to observe that India's acceptance of Tibet as a part of China is conditional upon Tibet's enjoyment of autonomy (Interview with Karnad, 10 August, 2007). China, therefore, demands stronger and more unambiguous statements from New Delhi on China's sovereignty over Tibet, which India has resisted so far (Mohan 2003: 168).⁵

TIBET: THE SPIRIT OF INDIA

The culture of Tibet is a glowing example of how the stream of Indian consciousness crossed the Himalayan frontiers and flowed into far-off lands, transforming their body, mind and soul into an eternity of love, peace and compassion through a community of ideals and institutions.

Like Om Mani Padme Hum, “The jewel in the lotus”, these ideals inspired Tibetans into a life of virtue, devotion and sacrifice. The grandeur of man’s material advances in the world outside were matched by the glory of spiritual heights on the ‘Roof of the World’ where millions of people tuned themselves to the gospel of the Arya, the Noble one, the Buddha from India and sought salvation through it. While India is fast forgetting these ancient links with Tibet, Tibetans everywhere adore India as the root of all that is noble and good and worthy of emulation in the history of human civilization.

INDIA’S VIEW OF TIBET’S POLITICAL STATUS:

When Guru Padmasambhava crossed the Himalayan heights and stepped into Tibet or when Shanta Rakshita went there and introduced the Brahmi alphabet or when Atisha preached to them what he called the true essence of Mahayana, was their Karma Bhoomi or field of action Tibet, a region of China or an independent Tibet, a fully endowed self-governing political entity? As far as we know, they were functioning within the bounds of an independent entity called Tibet. The Chinese chronicles such as Gaoseng Zhuan (Biographies of Eminent Monks) and Yuzhi Shenseng Zhuan (Biographies of Monks with Magical Power) written in the 6th and 16th centuries respectively have recorded the visit of almost every Indian scholar, saint or priest to their shores. Interalia, they mention Kashyap Matanga and Dharmaratna , Kumarajiva and Bodhidharma, Amogha Vajra and Vajra Bodhi but none of those who went from India to Tibet. If Tibet were an integral part of China, monks from India ,who brought Buddhism to Tibet and founded its various sects would have figured too in Chinese chronicles. The long chain of eminent Indian saints who visited Tibet were not visiting China in visiting that country.

India’s ties with China through centuries of history were extremely close but they were forged by altogether a different set of spiritual and cultural personages from India than those who went to Tibet. Their domain of activity was China as different from Tibet , which was obviously a distinct and separate religious, cultural and political entity. By the same token the border between Tibet and India was treated historically as Indo-Tibetan and not as Sino-Indian border.

As a national entity and as a power in the region to India’s north, Tibet had its ups and downs. It had powerful rulers in ancient times who invaded China and menaced its frontiers. For example Trisong Detsen (755-797 A.D.) invaded parts of China including its capital Changan (now Xian) in 763 A.D. and forced China to pay tribute. In the year 821 Chinese Emperor Hwang Te concluded a peace treaty with the Tibetan ruler Tsenpo , the successor of Trisong Detsen as follows:

The 821 treaty was undertaken in order to ward off Tibetan invasions of China which were becoming frequent. The treaty amounted to a no-war pact between two independent and plenipotentiary powers. It contained a solemn vow of good neighbourliness:

The treaty of 821 further affirmed:

Subsequently whenever China entered its forces into Tibet without the concurrence of the latter, it was in violation of the express terms of the bilateral treaty of 821.

India did not hesitate to deplore China's invasion of Tibet when the People's Liberation Army forced its entry into Tibet in 1949. In a note dated October 26, 1950, the Indian foreign office told the Chinese foreign office how it looked at the event:

“And in order that this agreement, establishing a great era when Tibetans shall be happy in Tibet and Chinese shall be happy in China, shall never be changed”.

“Both Tibet and China shall keep the country and frontiers of which they are now in possession. The whole region to the east of that being the country of Great China and the whole region to the west being assuredly the country of Great Tibet. From either side of that frontier there shall be no warfare, no hostile invasions and no seizure of territory”.

“Having consulted to consolidate still further the measure of neighbourly contentment, they have made a great treaty”.

“Both Tibet and China shall keep the country and frontiers of which they are now in possession. The whole region to the east of that being the country of Great China and the whole region to the west being assuredly the country of Great Tibet. From either side of that frontier there shall be no warfare, no hostile invasions and no seizure of territory”.

“In the context of world events, invasion by Chinese troops of Tibet cannot but be regarded as deplorable and in the considered judgment of the Government of India, not in the interest of China or peace”.⁶

With the growing military pacts between US and Pakistan in the early 1950s, India was perhaps “impelled to enter into a somewhat asymmetrical agreement with China in April 1954 on ‘Trade and Intercourse between India and the Tibet Region of China,’ also known as the “Panchsheel Agreement.” Due to this, India had to renounce its British India inherited extraterritorial rights in Tibet, and recognize the ‘Tibet region of China’ as a part of China. This negated the principle of reciprocity, since China did not correspondingly recognize India's sovereignty over Kashmir. The agreement called for five principles of peaceful coexistence between India and China - Mutual respect, Mutual non-interference, Mutual non-aggression, equality and cooperation, and peaceful coexistence.⁷

After the Tibetan uprising of 1959, China annexed the region, with the Tibetan spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama and Lakhs of Tibetan refugees, fleeing to India. They were granted asylum in India, by the then Indian government. China suspected India's involvement in the uprising, based on a US led covert operation led by its Central Intelligence Agency, leading to a souring of relations between the two nations.⁸

Other Border Disputes :

India and China share a 4,056-km border, heavily disputed in several areas. The recognized border today, is the Line of Actual Control (LAC). The demarcation existed as the informal cease-fire line between India and China after the 1962 conflict until 1993, when its existence was officially accepted as the 'Line of Actual Control' in a bilateral agreement.⁹

Aksai Chin:-

Aksai Chin, in the eastern part of Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, forms an important part of the Sino-Indian border dispute. The fact that a third party, the British, was responsible for drawing up borders before Indian independence has further complicated matters. India considers the Johnson Line drawn up in 1865, and advocated by the British post 1940s, which puts Aksai Chin as part of India, as the official border in this region. On the other hand, China considers the MeeCartney MacDonald Line, which left the Aksai Chin within Chinese borders, as the official border.**10**

Today, Aksai Chin is administered by China, but continues to be claimed by India. China National Highway 219 runs through the region, from Yecheng in Xinjiang to Lhatse in Tibet, and was recently repaved to survive harsh weather, in 2012. This highway is strategically important to the Chinese because provides an essential north-south transportation and logistics link between its two most western territories – Xinjiang Province and Tibet.**11**

In 2013, Chinese troops entered the Daulat Beg Oldi region, close to Aksai Chin, into Indian territory, causing a three-week standoff that was later resolved through bilateral negotiations.**12**

Shaksgam :-

Shaksgam Tract or the Trans-Karakoram Tract is an area of 9,900 square kilometers currently administered by China as part of its Xinjiang region. The area was controlled by Pakistan until it ceded the region to China in 1963 under the Sino-Pak Frontier Agreement.**13**

An important step in the growing China and Pakistan relations. India claims this region to be a part of its territory, and the dispute continues today. The Hotan Golmud Highway built by the Chinese in this region, links Xinjiang to Qinghai province and central China. It provides faster access to Golmud, a commercially and militarily significant base for China, making the area of strategic importance to them. The Siachen Glacier is also situated close to Shaksgam Valley, giving this region military importance in terms of the India-Pakistan conflict. This is why India is wary of Chinese control and development of the region, given Pakistan and China's strategic alliance .**14**

The Korean Crisis:-

It was just coincidence that when India recognized the birth of the People's Republic of China, around the same time, a crisis broke out in the Korean Peninsula. An emergent session of Parliament was convened on July 31, 1950 to discuss the Korean crisis. Drawing the attention of the House, President Dr. Rajendra Prasad said that Prime Minister Nehru had appealed to the Russian Prime Minister Joseph Stalin and to the Secretary of State of the US, Dean Acheson that the authorities of these two great countries should be exerted to localize the arm struggle in Korea, and break the dead lock in the Security Council of the United Nations over the admission of the People's Republic of China, so that the present international tension might be eased and the way opened to the solution of the Korean problem by discussion in the Security Council.**15**

The continuing border-dispute between China and India is a puzzle for many. Despite six decades of attempts at resolution, the dispute persists in the face of official bonhomie and booming trade relations between the two rising giants. It is even more puzzling considering that China has managed to resolve its land-border disputes with countries as disparate as North Korea, Mongolia, Nepal, Afghanistan, Burma, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Russia, often at disadvantageous terms (Kang 2008: 89–90; Ramachandran 2008). The Indians are especially exercised by their observation that while China has long ago settled its territorial dispute with Burma along the McMahon Line, it has consistently refused to entertain Indian suggestions for a similar settlement of their dispute in the Eastern sector (Chellaney 2006: 176).¹⁶

PRE-1962 CONFLICT ENVIRONMENT BETWEEN INDIA AND CHINA :-

The bilateral relations between India and China encountered both highs and lows from the early 1950's until 1962. The early part of relations remained quite cordial, based on the theory of "Panchsheel – The peaceful co-existence" as promulgated by the first Indian Prime Minister, Mr. Jawaharlal Nehru. However, these relations soon started deteriorating. The suspicions about Chinese intentions started growing in the Indian hierarchy after its appraisal of the construction of the strategically important road link of Tibet–Xinjiang. On the other side, Provision of political asylum to the Dalai Lama by India in 1959, after the Tibetan uprising, alarmed the Chinese leadership about the Indian government intentions. In short, the seeds of mistrust had been sown just a decade after the states of India and China came into existence. The international politics in 1950s had a significant impact on diplomatic posturing between India and China. The early years of relations between communist China and formally non-aligned India were cold and barren until Indian's foreign policy began asserting its independence of the West in the cold war situation. The declaration of Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence between China and India was a big blow to both power blocs, the Soviet and the U.S. China's peace offensive during the Bandung Phase (1954-1958) aimed at enlisting the non-aligned, newly free nations against imperialism, and India's strong support for the non-aligned movement forced the USSR and the U.S. to enter a phase of détente (which later culminated in peaceful resolution of the Cuban Missile Crisis). U.S. and Soviet interests started to converge on India in the late 1950s. Knowledge of growing Sino-Soviet differences (which had not reached the stage of open disputation yet) and the willingness of the super-powers to back India, hardened Nehru's attitude towards the border dispute.¹⁷

Role of parliament in Sino Indian relations:-

The Parliament's role in Sino-Indian relations pre-dates even the independence of the country and can be traced back to the provisional Parliament called the constituent assembly (legislative). Even before the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) was formally proclaimed on 1 October 1949, Professor N.G. Ranga of the Congress, regarded as the 'Father of the House', moving a cut motion in the Lok Sabha on 4 December 1947 relating to the demands for grants of Ministry of External Affairs, said, China had become a sort of cockpit between the Soviet Russia and America. Are we going to keep mum about it, are we going to allow her to become an unfortunate victim of these powers as Republic Spain has become? Should we not take a positive stand in regard to this?

Another Congress member, Brajeswar Prasad, supporting the sentiment of Professor Ranga, said, 'India and China are destined to be leaders of Asia. Joined together they will be force to be reckoned with.'¹⁸

He even went to the extent of proposing a federal union, saying, 'It is in common interest of both the states to evolve a federal plan of union.' India's nuanced approach to deal with China which India is pursuing today can be traced to Nehru's calibrated response to China during early years of India's independence. Nehru, in his inimitable candour and circumspection, was of the view that since the position in China was not fully crystallized, it was imprudent for India to get entangled in its internal problems or express an opinion which might prove embarrassing later. Articulating his views, he said, ... members may perhaps let themselves go about what should be done in China, Japan, Siam and Peru, but I fear it is a little difficult and it will be a little irresponsible for me to talk about these various matters. Naturally India is interested in Asian countries, even more than the rest of the world.'¹⁹

Conclusion :-

To conclude we can say that the Sino- Indian relations remained not stable .Both the nations got independence from the British imperialism. Besides this both the nations passed through many conflicts as –Sino Indian border issue of 1962, 1967, 1987, and Dokhlam issue 2017. Prime minister's visit in the year 1988 is considered as the important positive step in the Sino Indian Interactions .Before this Interactions have remained strained right from 1947 to till date .However now a days they are working as competitors in the Asian region.

On the diplomatic front, while cooperation has taken place in several bilateral and multilateral agreements, resolving some disputes .China is the only permanent member of the Security Council that has refused to support India's bid for a permanent seat. This suggests that China will continue attempting to ensure India's power and influence remains limited, at least in the near future.

At the same time, to ensure the maintenance of its strategic autonomy on the global scale, and not get cowed down by US dominance, it is advantageous for India to continue cooperation with China in non-contentious areas.

Greater Sino-Indian economic cooperation has the potential to confer mutual gains upon both nations. The enlargement of common markets, deepening of global division of labour and lowering of costs in natural resource and space exploration, can be of benefit to both. Additionally, both nations will continue to see an increased bargaining power within the international economic system, with cooperation. On the other hand, certain bottlenecks still exist on the path to mutual gains. Varied domestic interests in both nations bring up opposition to trade relations, witnessed often in India due to its diverse yet democratic politics back home. The influence of powerful external markets, particularly US, also plays a significant role, as it would prefer a weak Sino-Indian relationship for its own gains. Lastly, the bilateral disputes and regional and global geopolitics we've discussed above, create a push towards competition between the two, creating a challenge to growth cooperation Thus, there are two competing tendencies towards cooperation and competition, that are simultaneously being acted upon by both nations. Currently it seems that cooperation is being pursued for

selfish neo-liberal style aims. India is far from the idealist nation, it was during Nehru's times, and China's expansionist tendencies are evident from its actions on the world stage. Competition continues to be the underlying drive behind Sino-Indian relations. While the nature of competition might have shifted away from direct military conflict, it is likely to continue being manifested in permanent tension between the two nations in the future.

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