

Sino-India rapprochement, real or diplomatic deception?

Introduction

The new decade has welcomed many possibilities for China, as it emerges as the new superpower. Almost every Asian country is involved in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), despite India's protest against it. The geopolitical dynamics between India and China have been rough and uncertain – without guaranteeing a cooperative future. China has promoted “peaceful co-existence” stance with India but its activities in South Asia interprets a growing influence and a threat for India. This paper provides a brief analysis of the reality of Sino-Indian relations by viewing South Asia's influence.

Sino-Indian rapprochement: Relations with South Asia

China's engagement with South Asian countries emphasizes bilateral rather than the multilateral dimension of interactions. Moreover, China's regionalism foreign policy, a soft power approach has uplifted China's image but has served as a detriment to India. This is because China has stepped in to help South Asian (SA) countries with their need to build infrastructure when India has struggled to provide resources to SA countries. For example, China signed a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the Maldives and also helped the Maldives build an International airport. Nepal has also benefited by signing the BRI plan, as China has allowed Nepal to use its land as a getaway for trade, and has promoted Nepal's tourism sector. Another significant gain for China in SA was the

Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. The port, built with China's assistance was eventually leased to China for 99 years because Sri Lanka was unable to pay back the Chinese loans.

India and China's relation has been affected by their diplomacy in SA, that has impacted the Sino-Indian rapprochement. Chinese foreign policy's significant aspects are non-interference and its image projection. China's non-interference policy is appreciated by many countries as they do not have to adhere to rules on climate protection or labour rights. As for its image projection, China's "Wolf Warrior" diplomacy tries to appeal to its audience and advance its interests abroad. Whereas, PM Modi has taken policy changes, to promote Delhi's ability to establish regional peace and economic integration. India's "Neighbourhood First" policy helps India focus on reconnecting with its smaller neighbours. Therefore, regionalism may open opportunities for functional cooperation between the two countries in the region, but their pursuit of regional integration may also destabilise the region. Thus, China's growing political and economic influence in South Asia is evident and inevitable. Moreover, the two countries have gone to war with each other, first over the Tibet region that China considers its domestic territory and second over the Ladakh border, which is also a cause of conflict and a more recent phenomenon.

Conclusion

It appears that India's relations with the smaller neighbours have deteriorated and China has exerted its influence in the region which ultimately threatens India. The threat India faces is its lack of influence in the region and an ally of Pakistan becoming a superpower. The relation between the two may be played by China as "cooperative", but viewing South Asian relations of the two countries, it reflects that the mutual trust is lacking. Thus, diplomatic deception is evident

between the two countries.

Weekly Newsletter

US in favor of asserting influence in Pacific against China:



The United States of America has been opposing the China's expansionist behavior and territorial claims in South China Sea for a long time. In order to contain the influence and expansion of China in Pacific, the USA sends warships via strategic waterway almost frequently. These exercises and objecting the claims of China by the USA has upset Chinese authorities. China believes that it has restrained the

relationships and also undermining the stability in the region. South China Sea is a part of Pacific Ocean and China claims ninth-tenth of South China Sea. About \$3 trillion worth of trade takes place in South China Sea every year. Along with China, Brunei, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam hold the competing claims.

In August 2020, a US Navy aircraft carrier carried out an exercise in the disputed South China Sea. A strike group, led by the USS Ronald Reagan, conducted flight operations and high-end maritime stability operations and exercises. This drill took place amid the heightened tensions between China and USA. USA has accused China of taking advantage of pandemic to enforce claims over South China Sea and elsewhere. On August 28th, The United States Department of Defense said that China launches tests of four ballistic missiles during military exercise around the Paracel Islands in the disputed territory of South China Sea which is a clear threat to peace and security in the region. The Pentagon claimed that such exercises by China violated her commitment under 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea that would complicate the relations and escalate tensions. It is said that over the past few decades China has built up military installations on several disputed reefs and outcrops in the South China Sea to assert its claim over much of the area. Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Taiwan and Indonesia also have maritime claims to the sea. China claims that USA is grossly interfering in her internal affairs and that China will take firm measures to uphold the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies and individuals.

Recently in December 2020, the USA has warned China that her warships will be more assertive if China violated International Law and expansionist policies in South China

Sea. Pentagon has claimed that “several countries, notably Russia and China are contesting the balance of power in key regions and seeking to undermine the existing world order”. Pentagon further added that US Navy will be more present and visible in the Pacific to detect and document any breach of International Law. China responded that US is involved in rousing up the conflict in the region.

After Years of Considering Them a Foe, US Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Meet Taliban:



On Tuesday, General Mark A. Milley, Chairman of Joint Chiefs

of Staff met Taliban officials in Doha, Qatar and senior leaders of Afghan Taliban on Wednesday in Kabul. General Milley for prolonged time considered Taliban as the formidable foe that would not fade away in dust easily. The Associated Press has reported that Milley met with Taliban officials earlier this year in June, but the meeting was kept a secret. Milley met with senior US officials and the President Ashraf Ghani. The officials discussed the contemporary security environment in Afghanistan in which they emphasized specifically on the immediate reduction of violence. If the violence continues and the attacks increase, it will put the progress of Peace talks and agreements at risk. The Taliban led violence is creating a burden on the Afghan security forces, for which the innocent civilians suffer. Taliban have been deliberately destroying the roads, infrastructure and bridges of the country in order to halt the deployment of Afghan troops. According to the military spokeswoman, Commander Sarah Flaherty the meeting was a part of the military channel established as a part of deal in February between US-Taliban. The deal called for the withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan in spring and Taliban to initiate negotiations with the Afghan government. As a part of deal, Taliban are to cut off all ties with Al-Qaeda and not allow the land of Afghanistan to be used as terrorist's safe haven. But US did not withdrew the troops, as it claims that the withdrawal of forces depends upon the on-ground condition in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Taliban still maintain contact with Al-Qaeda and have been involved in violent attacks that target Afghan security forces and civilians. Flaherty further added, "The Chairman discussed the need for an immediate reduction of violence and accelerate progress towards a negotiated political solution which contributes to regional stability and safeguards U.S. national interests." The agenda of such meetings is to achieve credibility and trust in Afghanistan and that the US is fully committed to bringing peace and stability in the country. However, Biden's policy on the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan remains unclear

and has not publicly declared if he will continue with the February agreements or not. If the US troops withdraw, some of the military equipment will be taken back to America, some will be handed over to Afghan security forces while remaining will be destroyed.

Smoke Box in South Asia:



Analysts call air pollution as a “Silent Killer” and the SMOG will be increased yearly in plain lands of South Asia. Rice farmers traditionally use combine harvesters to cut their rice in October, leaving behind about four inches of stubble. With less than two weeks before they have to ready their fields to sow wheat, burning is the fastest way to clear the land without any cost and without any effort. In Pakistan, rice is grown on an area of about two million hectares, mainly in the

Punjab and Sindh provinces. Most of the fields are cleared by burning every year. Farmers say the new farm equipment can help combat smog, but note that crop burning produces only a small share of the province's pollution.

These cities are the most populated cities around the globe and the air pollution index is getting higher every year because of factories and massive use of automobiles and lastly at the end of year burning of field make it more badly. Now the Governments are providing Machines to the farmers for shedding the field waste rather than burning it, farmers have been using the rice stubble shredder and Happy Seeder for the past few years technology will facilitate farmers and government in their own ways technology could cut greenhouse gas emissions by 78 percent. Efforts to curb air pollution will benefit South Asia in the future and this will have a positive impact on people's life and most importantly hospitals will be less burdened.

South Asia took over China and other countries of the world and become the hub of the most polluted cities in the world. In 2020, twenty-one of the world's 30 worst polluted cities were in India, the Pakistani city of Lahore and Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, also made the top 10, making South Asia a particularly toxic region. Air pollution is a longstanding problem in Pakistan, India & Bangladesh in every October and November, contaminates in the air in Punjab province shoot up as farmers burn rice stalks left behind after harvesting to clear their fields to plant wheat. South Asia failed to meet WHO PM 2.5 targets. PM 2.5 is fine particulate matter that is good to inhale and not harmful to the human body. It is a health emergency the air quality monitors in South Asia routinely show hazardous levels in November and December. An estimated 1.2 million people have died because of India's dirty air in 2017.

Dividends to Pakistan's Economy from Afghan Peace – Challenges and Opportunities

The Afghan Peace Process has welcoming prospects for Pakistan, which is an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan. The two neighboring countries have shared tortuous relations in the past, but the peace talks are expected to have a positive impact on their relations. The peace talks provide Pakistan an opportunity to strengthen its presence in the regional politics. The Afghan Peace Process will help Pakistan suppress the antagonistic actors in Afghanistan from prospering. The initiation of peace process was the extensive diplomatic effort by Pakistan that made the process to follow the path ahead smoothly for which Pakistan was appreciated by USA. Pakistan is ambitious to project herself as a peace loving State and also that the prosperity of the region is closely linked to having peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan has been making sure since the beginning that the peace process is completely Afghan owned and no external factors gain access to any kind of interference.

To encourage and improve the trade and investment relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan, National Assembly Pakistan has organized a two-day seminar titled “Pakistan and Afghanistan Investment and Trade Forum” on Monday 28th, 2020. Prime Minister Imran Khan addressed to the seminar as chief guest. 17-member Afghan parliamentary delegation, led by Speaker of Wolsey Jirga Mr Rahmani are also a part of this seminar. The USAID Pakistan has extended a supportive hand for the sake of regional connectivity and integration initiative. While addressing to the seminar, Prime Minister Imran Khan

along with NA Speaker Asad Qaiser and Speaker of Afghan Wolesi Jirga (Afghanistan's parliament) Mir Rahman Rahmani insisted on boosting the trade and investment between Pakistan and Afghanistan to generate more wealth and to encourage the industrialization. They also emphasized that the normalization of traffic between states will improve the condition of trade that has been damaged further by the pandemic.

Prime Minister Imran Khan said that the connection between Pakistan and Afghanistan is quite old and no foreign interference has ever succeeded in Afghanistan. He further explained that Afghani people have always taken their own decisions and Pakistan will be happy to work with any government that Afghani nation will choose. Prime Minister sympathetically said that the 40 years of tragedy in Afghanistan is unfortunate and it has been effecting Pakistan for past 18 years as well. He also suggested that dwelling in past has only causes mistrust but we, as nations, need to look beyond it to reassure transit trade and future investments. Following are the economic peace dividends for Pakistan and Afghanistan if the Peace Process materializes:

The first and the most significant dividend of the Peace Process is the Afghan-Pakistan trade. Both countries will be able to continue trade without the irritant of smuggling of timber, mineral resources and other goods. Afghan Peace Process will pave the way for traders to do open and legal trade which will eradicate the illicit trade in form of smuggling. This will

encourage the small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in both countries to enhance legal trade of goods and products. The second dividend, also economic in nature, relates to creation of regional energy corridor. The end of instability, and war offers Afghanistan and Pakistan a safe corridor into Central Asia. This would create a regional energy corridor from Sixth, Central Asia into South Asia. The economy of Afghanistan can flourish if it can earn revenues by levying

the TAPI Pipeline. Afghanistan will be able to extract royalties from these projects and also meet her energy requirements. Moreover, peace in Afghanistan, the "Heart of Asia," will allow Pakistan and other South Asian countries to connect with Central Asia, which offers a great opportunity at developing Central Asia-South Asia (CASA) electricity transmission line.

Thirdly, it is significant for Pakistan's national interest to have a peaceful border at the western end. The success of the Afghan Peace talks can guarantee peace within Pakistan. If the Afghan government, Taliban and the US find common grounds as a result of negotiations, it will be advantageous in helping curb the terrorism that has caused immense damage to both nations. This will be vital for safeguarding Pakistan's security interests along the Pakistan-Afghan border. Peace and stability in Afghanistan is in the utmost interest of Pakistan.

The fourth dividend of the Peace Process relates to the role of Pakistan as a negotiator in the Afghan Peace process. The Peace Talks help Pakistan in building up her pragmatic image globally. During the entire process, Pakistan represents itself as a country that is dedicated to peaceful development in the region. Stability in Afghanistan will bring out the positive and peace loving image of Pakistan to the world, Pakistan will have a peaceful neighborhood. The rigorous efforts as a negotiator have helped Pakistan gather international appreciation. Pakistan holds a significant position in the Afghan Peace Process because as a central player, attaining peace and stability in Afghanistan would not possible without her participation. The Afghan peace talks are not only a golden opportunity for achieving peace in Afghanistan but offer a chance for Pakistan to gain a reputation of "Peace Promoter," at international chessboard of politics.

Fifthly, the efforts of Pakistan demonstrate her clear

intentions for Afghanistan. The dedicated efforts on both sides, will help regain the lost trust and push both countries towards mutual cooperation. Reducing the trust deficit is crucial for building peace in the region.

Sixth, the active participation of Pakistan in ensuring peace in Afghanistan which will subsequently lessen the influence of India in the region and in Afghanistan. This is important because India, an aggressor state, has been taking advantage of the hinges between Pakistan and Afghanistan, both trade wise and as well sentimentally. The Peace Process holds a tantamount position in the relationship of both countries.

Seventh, if Pakistan is able to lessen the influence of adversaries in Afghanistan, it would augment the communication between the leaderships and the people on both sides of the border.

The Peace Process will restart the trade, freedom of movement, economic prosperity and strengthening of defense between Pakistan and Afghanistan which will eventually help the economies to travel towards betterment since Pakistan also provides the shortest access to the sea for landlocked countries. If Pakistan's objective of bringing peace in Afghanistan materializes, great dividends for both countries will just be one arm's length away.

Confrontation in Himalayas



In more than four decades for the first time tensions sparked in the world's most difficult terrain, Himalayas when China and India stumbled in a bloody military confrontation. In early June, clashes resulted in the death of 20 Indian soldiers and an unconfirmed number of Chinese soldiers. The clashes are a result of competing claims of China and India on the demarcation of the border called Line of Actual Control. Neither state has agreed on the exact position of the border that is 3,500 km long. The dispute over Ladakh, that has cultural ties with Tibet, remains unresolved and highly dangerous as the tensions can aggravate between the two nuclear powers, China and India. Since the abrogation of Article 370, putting an end to Jammu and Kashmir's special status, Indian government has been taking measures which are provocative to the neighboring countries. The Chinese authorities were already suspicious of India trying to restore the status quo pre 1962 Sino-India War, in which India faced a humiliating defeat. Thus, when India started constructing a road network in the Union Territory of Ladakh, Chinese suspicions grew, giving rise to tension between both countries.

Indian authorities began constructing roads and bridges in the area of Galwan Valley that lies near to the India China border, Line of Actual Control (LAC). India is building a bridge, in Galwan valley that will give access to another strategically important area Aksai Chin. China is skeptical that Indian construction of bridge are meant to facilitate the fast movement of troops in order to make the recapturing of Aksai Chin easier. China captured Aksai Chin in 1962 and holds great importance because it is required for a national highway between Tibet and Xinjiang NH219. Despite the clashes between two nuclear powers, India has signaled that it will not stop the construction of new infrastructure. India aims to neutralize China's logistical advantage. The Indian government is planning to improve the rail lines in border area with China. On the other hand, China started modernizing the infrastructure in early 1950s and has now developed a fully functional vast road and railway network in Tibet and Yunnan Province. The poor infrastructure of India means it will face difficulties in defending the areas it claims against China. The developed Chinese infrastructure is seen as a threat, because in the latest clashes China was able to move a huge number of troops with few hours along the LAC.

The wariness of China strengthened with the aggressive stance of Indian government in Jammu and Kashmir and her claims on Gilgit Baltistan. Apart from that India has given asylum to Tibetan government in their country and is closely aligned with the US. New Delhi's defense technology cooperation with Washington might play a role in helping India change the geopolitical landscape of Indo-Pacific region. Presently, Indian economy is facing a downturn, while the cases of corona virus are growing. Options for India to direct the territorial shift in her favor remain limited, because China is does not only have a stronger military but also a stronger economy. India has restored to nonmilitary options such as boycotting Chinese products, banning 118 Chinese applications. The economic relationship between China and India came under

highlight after 15th June and the Prime Minister launched a campaign of self-reliance encouraging the citizens to buy local products. Apart from this Indian government has also announced to review procedure of investment from the neighboring countries. India has also been engaged in stepping up her partnerships with the like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

As a result of the growing tensions, both countries have deployed thousands of troops on the border along with a heavy supply of weapons- artillery, tanks, fighter jets and helicopters. The Chinese run state media agency, Global Times said that the country's security forces would "quickly deal a heavy blow to Indian troops, and they will be all annihilated" if a war is provoked from New Delhi. Alternatively, the Indian Defense Minister, Rajnath Singh warned that Chinese should have no doubts about the resolve of India's determination to fight back if the country's territorial sovereignty is challenged. In the aftermath of India unilaterally declaring Ladakh a federal territory, the relations with China became adversarial. These clashes can further exacerbate the relations between China and India, putting the ailing peace at a much greater risk. Consequently, both states will not only look to increase the competition militarily and economically but will also look towards influencing their maritime spheres. The Asian waters can face Sino-Indian rivalry.

On 10th September, a meeting was held in Moscow, between Chinese Foreign Minister, Wang Yi and his Indian counterpart, Subrahmanyam Jaishankar where both states agreed to move toward de-escalation on the border and continue through dialogues to ease the tensions. However, the tensions flared up again when India blamed China for the violence on the border by labelling Chinese President Xi Jinping as the "architect" of the hostilities on the border. Five rounds of military level talks have failed to reach a peaceful conclusion between both countries. Tens of thousands of troops

from both countries are still deployed on the disputed border of Himalayas. To defeat each other, states can rely on hard military tactics and increasing their economic dependence in the neighboring countries. To turn events in her favor against China's superiority, India will seek multilateral diplomacy and form alliances with the countries that have a similar agenda. The tensions can become more volatile in future if India does not give up her aggressive stance in the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir and does not surrender to the fact that the problem is not a matter of internal affairs, but external. The clashes between China and India can have grave consequences for the neighboring countries, especially Pakistan.