



Map 4: India's Disputed Border with China

4 India's Intractable Border Dispute with China

Brahma Chellaney

As geopolitical rivals, India and China face each other over a highly disputed border. Virtually the entire 2,521 mile (4,057 km) border—one of the longest in the world—is in dispute, without a mutually agreed line of control in the Himalayas separating the two countries. The amount of land under dispute tops 52,125 square miles (135,000 km²), or approximately the size of Costa Rica or the U.S. state of Alabama. It is apparent that in comparison with China's territorial disputes with other neighbors now or in the past, the PRC's land disputes with India stand out both for their sheer size and for their importance to the region.

Both China and India seek to play a pivotal global role by reclaiming the glory they enjoyed before they went into decline from the 18th century onward and fell prey to the machinations of colonialist invaders. They see their rise not as a challenge to the presently dominant countries, but as ushering in a return to the normal state of affairs in history when they were preeminent. Even though neither country is in a position to dominate the other, yet each views the other as a potential geopolitical rival.

As China and India gain economic heft, they are drawing ever more international attention at a time of an ongoing global shift of power to Asia. Their underlying strategic dissonance and rivalry, however, usually attracts less notice. The two giants represent competing political and social models of development. In fact, China and India are more than just nation-states; they are large ancient civilizations that together represent nearly two-fifths of humanity. How the intricate and fluid relationship between these two great countries of markedly different histories, identities, and cultures evolves will have an important bearing on Asian geopolitics, international security, and globalization.

Origins of the Sino-Indian Border Dispute

While it has become fashionable to pair and compare China and India, as if they were joined at the hip, it is often forgotten that the two are—comparatively

speaking—new neighbors.¹ The huge Tibetan plateau, measuring almost two-thirds the size of the entire European continent, separated the two civilizations, thereby limiting interaction to sporadic cultural and religious contacts, with political relations absent. It was only after Tibet's annexation in 1951 that Han Chinese troops appeared for the first time in large numbers on India's Himalayan frontiers.

As new neighbors, India and China have been on a steep learning curve. Their 32-day war in 1962 did not settle matters, because China's dramatic triumph only sowed the seeds of greater rivalry and India's own political rise. Today, China and India represent two separate cultural and political blocks, each with its own distinct set of values. India, which sees itself as a bridge between the West and the East, shares basic values more with Europe than with China. Politically, the Chinese and Indian societies remain polar-opposite in terms of their systems, with one under an authoritarian regime that rules by instilling fear and the other governed by a raucous democracy.

Paradoxically, after the Communists came to power in China in 1949, India was one of the first countries to embrace the Mao Zedong-led regime. Yet in one of his first actions after seizing power, Mao confided to Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin that Chinese forces were "preparing for an attack on Tibet," and he inquired whether the Soviet Air Force could help transport supplies to them.² Even as the new Communist state annexed the large historical buffer state of Tibet—an action that eliminated India's outer line of defense—the Indian government continued to court China, seeing it as a benign neighbor that had, like India, only recently emerged from the ravages of colonialism. New Delhi even opposed a discussion in the United Nations General Assembly in November 1950 on the then-independent Tibet's appeal for international help against Chinese aggression.

The Indian government, led by a romantic politician, Jawaharlal Nehru, was taken largely unawares by the start of the Chinese military attack on Tibet in October 1950, when global attention was focused on the Korean War. The PLA's rapid success in seizing eastern Tibet emboldened China to intervene in the Korean War. Nehru later admitted that he had not anticipated the swiftness and callousness with which China took over Tibet because he had been "led to believe by the Chinese Foreign Office that the Chinese would settle the future of Tibet in a peaceful manner by direct negotiation with the representatives of Tibet."³

Indeed, as proof of his strategic naïveté, Nehru recorded the following note in July 1949 to close an internal debate on Tibet within the Indian government, when a Communist victory appeared imminent in China:

Whatever may be the ultimate fate of Tibet in relation to China, I think there is practically no chance of any military danger to India arising from any change in Tibet. Geographically, this is very

difficult and practically it would be a foolish adventure. If India is to be influenced or an attempt made to bring pressure on her, Tibet is not the route for it. I do not think there is any necessity for our Defence Ministry, or any part of it, to consider possible military repercussions on the India-Tibetan frontier. The event is remote and may not arise at all.⁴

What Nehru credulously saw as a "foolish adventure" was mounted within a matter of months by Mao's regime, which gobbled up Tibet and gained control of its strategic crossroads, and then soon afterwards began exerting direct military pressure on India. What Nehru averred was geographically impractical all too soon became a geopolitical reality that has affected Indian security like no other development. It also helped create a common land corridor between the PRC and Pakistan, which helped to nurture the Sino-Pakistan strategic axis. Tibet's annexation also gave China, for the first time under Han Chinese rule, a contiguous border with India, Bhutan, and Nepal.

Yet Nehru remained such an incorrigible idealist that he even rejected the U.S. and Soviet proposal that India take China's vacant seat in the United Nations Security Council. The officially-blessed selected works of Nehru quote the then Indian prime minister as stating: "Informally, suggestions have been made by the U.S. that China should be taken into the UN but not in the Security Council and that India should take her place in the Council. We cannot, of course, accept this as it means falling out with China and it would be very unfair for a great country like China not to be in the Council."⁵

Another blunder that virtually guaranteed the festering of the Sino-Indian border dispute occurred in 1954, when Nehru signed a largely one-sided pact with Beijing. This pact ostensibly established India-China friendship under the rubric of "Panchsheel" or "five principles," of peaceful coexistence. The Panchsheel Agreement, as it became popularly known, incorporated a formal Indian recognition of the new Chinese control over Tibet, with India formally forfeiting all the extraterritorial rights and privileges it had enjoyed in Tibet until the Chinese invasion.⁶ This accord recorded India's agreement both to withdraw fully within six months its "military escorts now stationed at Yatung and Gyantse" in the "Tibet Region of China," as well as "to hand over to the Government of China at a reasonable price the postal, telegraph and public telephone services together with their equipment operated by the Government of India in Tibet Region of China." Up through the 1950 invasion, China had maintained a diplomatic mission in Lhasa, just as India did, underscoring Tibet's autonomous status.⁷

India's formal acceptance of the Chinese claim over Tibet came without extracting a reciprocal Chinese acceptance of the then prevailing Indo-Tibetan border, including the McMahon line in the east that was agreed upon in 1914 between the British Indian government and the then-autonomous Tibetan government. Indeed, Nehru misconstrued the mention of specific border-trade mountain passes and posts in the 1954 accord as Chinese acknowledgement of where the Tibetan frontier with India lay. To make matters worse, he refused to pay heed to Beijing's statements that it had signed a border-trade accord and not a border-settlement accord with India. In fact, no sooner had the Panchsheel Agreement been signed than China laid claim to some Indian frontier areas and then furtively intruded south of two mountain passes specified as border points in that accord. Before long, China began building a highway through India's Ladakh region to link Tibet with another vast, occupied region, Xinjiang, home to Turkic-speaking Muslim ethnic groups.⁸

In the years after the Panchsheel Agreement, Sino-Indian relations became tense, with Chinese cross-border encroachments culminating in a full-fledged Chinese military attack in 1962. Just as Mao began his invasion of Tibet while the world was occupied with the Korean War, he chose a perfect time for invading India: the beginning of the attack, spread over two separate rounds, coincided with a major international crisis that brought the United States and the Soviet Union within a whisker of nuclear war over the stealthy deployment of Soviet medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba. A little over a month after launching the invasion of India, Mao announced a unilateral ceasefire that, significantly, coincided with America's formal termination of Cuba's quarantine.

Mao's premier, Zhou Enlai, publicly admitted that the war was intended "to teach India a lesson." As for Nehru, after having reposed his implicit faith in China, he cried foul when Beijing deceived him. The day the Chinese invaded, a shattered Nehru confessed to the nation in the following words: "Perhaps there are not many instances in history where one country has gone out of her way to be friendly and cooperative with the government and people of another country and to plead their cause in the councils of the world, and then that country returns evil for good."⁹

Renewed Frontier Tensions and Disputes

India did not restore full diplomatic relations with China—broken by the 1962 war—until after Mao's death in September 1976. In 1981, India and China agreed to open negotiations on finding ways to resolve their border disputes. More than three decades later, those negotiations are still continuing, with little progress in settling those disputes. This despite the fact that the two sides have signed three vaunted border-related accords: 1) a 1993 agreement to maintain "peace and

tranquility along the Line of Actual Control" (although there is no mutually agreed line of control), let alone an *actual* line of control); 2) a 1996 accord on "confidence-building measures in the military field"; and 3) a 2005 agreement identifying six "guiding principles" for a settlement of the frontier disputes. But no sooner had the border-related principles been unveiled in 2005 with great fanfare than Beijing jettisoned one key element—the do-not-disturb-the-settled-populations principle—to buttress its claims on additional Indian areas. In recent years, the broadening of the Sino-Indian border talks into an all-encompassing strategic dialogue has been an unmistakable reminder that the negotiations stand deadlocked. Yet neither side wants to abandon the apparently fruitless process.

In the period since the border negotiations began in the early 1980s, the world has changed fundamentally. Indeed, with its rapidly accumulating military and economic power, China has emerged as a rising power in the making. The longer the negotiating process continues without yielding results, the greater the opportunity Beijing will have to mount strategic pressure on India and leverage its position. After all, China already holds the military advantage on the ground. Its forces control the heights along the long Himalayan frontier. Furthermore, by building new railroads, airports, and highways in Tibet, China is now in a position to move additional forces to the border rapidly, potentially giving it the ability to strike at India at a time of its choosing.

Diplomatically, China is a contented party, having occupied what it wanted—the Aksai Chin plateau, which is the size of Switzerland and provides the only accessible Tibet-Xinjiang route through the Karakoram passes of the Kunlun mountains. Yet China chooses to press claims on additional Indian territories, arguably as part of a grand strategy to gain leverage in bilateral relations and, more importantly, to keep India under military and diplomatic pressure. The authoritative *People's Daily*—the Chinese Communist Party mouthpiece that reflects official thinking—made this clear in an 11 June 2009 editorial: "China won't make any compromises in its border disputes with India."¹⁰ That reflects the Chinese position in the negotiations.

At the core of China's strategy is an apparent resolve to hold off indefinitely on a border settlement with India through an overt refusal to accept the territorial status quo. In addition to disputed borderlands, China occupies 16,672 square miles (43,180 km²) of the original princely state of Jammu and Kashmir—the so-called western sector in the Sino-Indian context—including 2,000 square miles (5,180 km²) ceded to it by Islamabad under the Sino-Pakistan boundary agreement of 1963. It also covets some 34,750 square miles (90,000 km²) of territory under Indian administration in the eastern sector, where Tibet shares a 640 mile (1,030 km) border with India's remote Arunachal Pradesh state, which is almost three times as

large as the island of Taiwan. In addition, several small but strategic tracts of land are in dispute in the central sector and in India's Ladakh region.

In not hiding its intent to further redraw the Himalayan frontiers, Beijing only helps highlight the futility of the ongoing process of political negotiations with India. After all, the territorial status quo can be changed, on the scale sought by China, not by political talks but by further military conquest. Yet, paradoxically, the political process remains important both for Beijing and New Delhi to provide the façade of bilateral engagement. China's assertive resurrection of its claims to Arunachal Pradesh in recent years could undermine this façade.

Sino-Indian Tensions over Arunachal Pradesh

Since 2006, China has publicly raked up the issue of Arunachal Pradesh, the northeastern Indian state that Beijing calls "southern Tibet" and which it claims largely as its own. Indian defense officials have reported a rising number of Chinese military incursions across the entire Himalayan border in recent years. That the Tibet issue remains at the core of the India-China divide is being underlined by Beijing itself by laying claim to additional Indian territories on the basis of alleged Tibetan ecclesial or tutelary links to them, not to any professed Han Chinese links.

Tibetan originally fashioned its claim to Arunachal Pradesh as a bargaining chip to compel India to recognize its occupation of the Aksai Chin plateau, in the Ladakh region of the original princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. For this reason, China withdrew from the Arunachal Pradesh areas it invaded during the 32-day war with India in 1962, but retained its territorial gains in Aksai Chin. Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping in 1979 even broached the exploratory idea of a package settlement: New Delhi would accept the Chinese control over Aksai Chin and Beijing would drop its claim on Arunachal, subject to "minor readjustments" along the line of control.

The PRC's more recent resurrection of its long-dormant claim to Arunachal Pradesh has largely coincided with Beijing eyeing that state's rich water resources. In fact, Beijing has recently unveiled the plan to build a dam near the Tibet-Arunachal border that would be more than twice as large as the Three Gorges Dam—the 38-gigawatt Motuo Dam. China's resource-driven claim to Arunachal closely parallels the way it became covetous of the Japanese-controlled Senkaku islands—the Diaoyu islands—only after the issue of developing petroleum resources on the continental shelf of the East China Sea came up at in the 1970s.

The resurrected claim to Arunachal Pradesh is linked with Beijing's successful strategy of getting India to accept gradually Tibet as part of China. Whatever leverage India still had on the Tibet issue was surrendered in 2003 when it shifted its position from Tibet being an "autonomous" region within China to it being "part of the territory of the People's Republic of China." This has simply strengthened

China's long-standing negotiating stance: what it occupies is Chinese territory, and what it claims must be shared—or as it puts it in reasonably sounding terms—through a settlement based on mutual accommodation and mutual understanding.

So, while publicly laying claim to the whole of Arunachal Pradesh, China in private has asked India to cede that state's strategic Tawang Valley—a critical corridor between Lhasa and Assam of immense military importance because it overlooks the so-called chicken-neck that connects India's northeast with the rest of the country. In fact, with the Dalai Lama having publicly repudiated Chinese claims that Arunachal Pradesh, or even just Tawang, were historically part of Tibet, a discomfited Beijing has sought to argue in the now-suspended dialogue process with his envoys that for any larger political deal to emerge, the Tibetan government-in-exile must support China's position that Arunachal has always been part of traditional Tibet. The plain fact is that with China's own claim to Tibet being historically dubious, its claims to Indian territories are doubly suspect.

Sino-Indian Trade Relations

Significantly, despite the cross-border incursions and tensions, China and India have consciously sought to downplay the border friction and instead put prime emphasis on their fast-growing trade. For example, when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited India in late 2010 the two countries decided to kick all contentious issues down the road and expand bilateral trade by two-thirds over the next five years. However, increased trade is no panacea for the sharpening geopolitical rivalry. First of all, while trade may benefit both sides, the perception in India is that China gains more. India's trade deficit with China is ballooning, and it largely exports raw materials to China and imports finished products.

The focus on trade, even as political disputes fester, plays into the Chinese agenda to secure new markets in India while continuing with a strategy to contain that country within the South Asian region. There has recently been a national outcry in India over attempts to undermine Indian brands through exports from China of fake pharmaceutical products labeled "Made in India." After Nigerian authorities seized a large consignment of fake anti-malarial drugs that had arrived from China with the "Made in India" stamp, Beijing promised to crack down on Chinese companies conducting such exports. However, perpetuating such an asymmetrical trade relationship indeed gives Beijing little incentive to bridge the political divide.

Nevertheless, from 2000 to 2010, Sino-Indian bilateral trade rose 20-fold, making it the only area where relations have thrived. But far from helping to turn the page on old rifts, this commerce has been accompanied by greater Sino-Indian geopolitical rivalry and military tensions. New Delhi's warning relationship with

Washington has only emboldened Beijing to up the ante through border provocations, resurrection of its claim to Arunachal Pradesh, and other diplomatic needling. Beijing had initially sought to improve ties with New Delhi so that it could dissuade it from moving closer to Washington. But after the United States and India cemented a civilian nuclear deal in mid-2005, China appears to have adopted a more coercive policy toward its southern neighbor, even adopting a type of psychological warfare.

Beijing's Psychological War on New Delhi

During 2009, Sino-Indian relations sank to their lowest political point in more than two decades when Beijing unleashed a psychological war upon New Delhi, employing its state-run media and nationalistic websites to warn of another armed conflict. It was a throwback to the coarse rhetoric China had used in the buildup to the war in 1962. The *People's Daily*, for example, berated India for "recklessness and arrogance" and asked it to weigh "the consequences of a potential confrontation with China."¹¹ Ignoring the lesson that booming trade by itself is no guarantee of moderation or restraint between states, China and India have left their political rows to future generations to clear up, with Wen Jiabao bluntly stating that sorting out the Himalayan border disputes "will take a fairly long period of time."¹²

Even as these old rifts remain, new problems have arisen, roiling relations further. China—which occupies one-fifth of the original princely state of Jammu and Kashmir—has started a troubling three-pronged policy to build pressure on New Delhi over Kashmir, where the disputed borders of India, Pakistan, and China converge. It has enlarged its footprint in Pakistani-occupied Kashmir (PoK) through new strategic projects and PLA deployment there, including sending from 7,000-11,000 PLA troops in 2010; it has attempted to question India's sovereignty over the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir; and it has officially shortened the length of the Himalayan border it shares with India by eliminating the 992 mile (1,597 km) line separating Indian Kashmir from Chinese-held Kashmir.

Furthermore, Chinese strategic projects around India, including ports in Sri Lanka and Pakistan and new transportation links with Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan, have been seriously unnerving India. The Chinese military presence in Pakistani-held Kashmir means that India faces Chinese troops on both flanks of its portion of Kashmir. The deepening China-Pakistan nexus also threatens to present India with a two-front theater in the event of a war with either country.

As a result of the renewed tensions, the India-China frontier has become more "hot" than the India-Pakistan border, but without rival troops trading fire. Indeed, Sino-Indian border tensions now are the most serious since the 1986-1987 local

military skirmishes that were triggered by the PLA moving south of a rivulet marking the line of control in Sumdorong Chu sector in Arunachal Pradesh. Those skirmishes brought war clouds before the two countries moved quickly to defuse the crisis. Today, the PLA's forays into Indian territory are occurring even in the only area where Beijing does not dispute the frontier—Sikkim's 128 mile (206 km) border with Tibet. Chinese troops repeatedly have attempted to gain control of Sikkim's evocatively named Finger Area, a tiny but key salient.

In response, India has been beefing up its defensive deployments in Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and Ladakh to prevent any Chinese land-grab. Besides bringing in tanks to reinforce its defenses in mountainous Sikkim, it is deploying two additional army mountain divisions and two squadrons of the advanced SU-30 MKI bomber-aircraft in its northeastern state of Assam, backed by three Airborne Warning and Control Systems. It also has launched a crash program to improve its logistical capabilities through new roads, airstrips, and advanced landing stations along the Himalayas. None of these steps, however, can materially alter the fact that China holds the military advantage on the ground.

Sino-Indian Geopolitical Tensions

Recent strains in Sino-Indian relations also have resulted from sharpening geopolitical rivalry. This was evident from China's botched 2008 move to symic the U.S.-India nuclear deal by seeking to block the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) from opening civilian nuclear trade with New Delhi. In the NSG, China landed itself in a position it tries to avoid in any international body—as the last holdout. The unsettled border, however, remains at the center of the bilateral tensions. China's increasing territorial assertiveness found expression in Beijing's unusual effort in 2009 to hold up approval of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) \$2.9-billion loan assistance plan for India because it included a flood-management project in Arunachal Pradesh. When the ADB eventually overrode the Chinese objections, Beijing expressed "strong dissatisfaction," saying approval could not change the "immense territorial disputes" with India.¹³

So, even as China has emerged as India's largest trading partner, the Sino-Indian strategic dissonance and border disputes have become more pronounced. New Delhi has sought to retaliate against Beijing's growing antagonism by banning Chinese toys and cell phones that do not meet international standards. But such modest trade actions can do little to persuade Beijing to abandon its moves to encircle and squeeze India strategically by employing China's rising clout in Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. In fact, the harsh truth is that India is staring at the harvest of a mismanagement of relations with China over decades by successive

governments that chose propitiation to leverage building. New Delhi unwittingly helped create the context to embolden Beijing to be assertive and belligerent.

Yet another question relates to China's intentions. In muscling up to India, is China seeking to intimidate India or actually fashioning an option to wage war? The present situation, in several key aspects, is similar to the one that prevailed in the run-up to the 1962 invasion of India. Consider the following parallels:

- Like in the pre-1962 war period, it has become commonplace internationally to speak of India and China in the same breath. The aim of "Mao's India war" in 1962, as Harvard scholar Roderick MacFarquhar has called it, was large political: To cut India down to size by demolishing what it represented—a democratic alternative to the Chinese autocracy.¹⁴ The swiftness and force with which Mao Zedong defeated India helped discredit the Indian model, boost China's international image and consolidate Mao's internal power. The return of the China-India pairing decades later is something Beijing viscerally detests.

- Just as the Dalai Lama's flight to India in 1959—and the ready sanctuary he got there—set the stage for the Chinese military attack, the exiled Tibetan leader, more than 50 years after his escape, stands as a bigger challenge than ever for China, as underscored by Beijing's stepped-up vilification campaign against him and its admission that it is now locked in a "life and death struggle" over Tibet. With Beijing now treating the Dalai Lama as its Enemy No. 1, India has come under greater Chinese pressure to curb his activities and those of his government-in-exile. The continuing security clampdown in Tibet since the March 2008 Tibetan uprising parallels the harsh Chinese crackdown in Tibet during 1959-1962.

- The present pattern of cross-frontier incursions and other border incidents as well as new force deployments and mutual recriminations is redolent of the situation that prevailed before the 1962 war. When in 1950, the PLA marched hundreds of miles south to occupy the then-independent Tibet and later nibble at Indian territories, this supposedly was neither an expansionist strategy nor a forward policy. But when the ill-equipped and short-staffed Indian army belatedly sought to set up posts along India's unmanned Himalayan frontier to try and stop further Chinese encroachments, Beijing and its friends elsewhere dubbed it a provocative "forward policy." In the same vein, the present Indian efforts to beef up defenses in the face of growing PLA cross-border forays are being labeled "new forward policy" by Beijing.

- The 1962 war occurred against the backdrop of China instigating and arming insurgents in India's northeast. Although such Chinese activities ceased after Mao's death, China has come full circle today, with Chinese-made arms increasingly flowing into guerrilla ranks in northeastern India, including via front organizations in Myanmar. India says it has taken up this matter with Beijing. While a continuing 14-year-old ceasefire has brought peace to Nagaland, some other Indian states like

Assam and Manipur are wracked by multiple insurgencies, allowing Beijing to fish in troubled waters. In fact, Pakistan-based terrorists targeting India now rely largely on Chinese arms—from the AK-56 assault rifles to the Type 86 grenades made by China's state-owned Norinco firm.

- Just as India had retreated to a defensive position in the border negotiations with Beijing in the early 1960s after having undermined its leverage through a formal acceptance of the "Tibet region of China," New Delhi similarly has been left in the unenviable position today of having to fend off ever greater Chinese territorial demands. Little surprise, therefore, the spotlight now is on China's Tibet-linked claim to Arunachal Pradesh rather than on Tibet's status itself.

Internationally, there are at least a couple of factors contributing to China's greater assertiveness toward India as part of an apparent strategy to prevent the rise of a peer rival in Asia. First, India's growing strategic ties with the United States are more than offset by America's own rising interdependence with China, to the extent that U.S. policy gives Beijing a pass on its human-rights abuses and frenetic military buildup at home and reckless strategic opportunism abroad. America's Asia policy is no longer guided by an overarching geopolitical framework as it had been under George W. Bush; rather it is becoming Sino-centric. That may explain why President Barack Obama's administration has kept mum on the Sino-Indian border tensions, instead of cautioning Beijing against any attempt to forcibly change existing frontiers. A second factor is the weakening of China's Pakistan card against India. Pakistan's descent into a jihadist dungeon has robbed China of its premier surrogate instrument against India, necessitating the exercise of direct pressure.

Conclusions

Against this geopolitical background, India can expect no respite from Chinese pressure. Whether Beijing actually sets out to teach India "the final lesson" by launching a 1962-style surprise war will depend on several factors, including India's defense preparedness to repel such an attack, domestic factors within China—such as economic and social unrest threatening the Communist hold on power—and the availability of a propitious international timing of the type the Cuban missile crisis had provided in 1962. But if India is not to be caught napping again, it has to inject greater realism into its China policy by shedding self-deluding shibboleths, shoring up its deterrent capabilities, and putting premium on leveraged diplomacy.

In a historical revisit to Nehru's slogan, *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* (Indians and Chinese are brothers), today there are those who trumpet the "Chindia" concept, which—disregarding all historic and current rivalries and antagonisms—attempts to blend the two rising powers together into one. However, the deterioration in China-

India relations in recent years demonstrates that rapidly expanding trade cannot be a true measure of progress in bilateral relations. Unless estranged neighbors fix their political relations, economics alone will not be enough to create goodwill or stabilize their relationship. Yet, while openly unwilling to accept the territorial status quo, China has pushed for a free-trade agreement with India. With Western and Japanese markets wracked by economic troubles, the Chinese export juggernaut needs a larger market share in India, the world's second fastest-growing economy.

The problems that divide India and China extend far beyond territorial and trade disputes to include environmental concerns and limited natural resources. Water is becoming a key security issue in Sino-Indian relations and a potential source of enduring discord. China is now pursuing major interbasin and interriver water transfer projects on the Tibetan plateau that threaten to diminish international river flows into India and other co-riparian states. The most dangerous idea China is toying with is the northward rerouting of the Brahmaputra, the world's highest river and also one of the fastest-flowing. Diversion of the Brahmaputra's water to the parched Yellow River is a project that China rarely discusses in public, because the project implies environmental devastation of India's northeastern plains and eastern Bangladesh, and would thus be akin to a declaration of water war on India and Bangladesh.¹⁵ Nevertheless, an officially blessed book published in 2005, *Tibet's Waters Will Save China*, openly championed the northward rerouting of the Brahmaputra.¹⁶

All of these territorial, trade, political, environmental, and natural resource issues are a striking reminder that Tibet remains at the heart of the India-China divide. For centuries, Tibet acted as a buffer state averting potential Sino-Indian tensions. However, Tibet ceased to be a political buffer when China annexed it more than six decades ago. But Tibet can still turn into a political bridge between China and India. For that to happen, two things are needed—a China-initiated process of reconciliation and healing in Tibet, and a more cooperative Sino-Indian relationship.

Notes

1. Peter Engardio, ed., *Chindia: How China and India Are Revolutionizing Global Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006); Jagdish N. Sheth, *Chindia Rising: How China and India Will Benefit Your Business* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008); and Jairam Ramesh, *Making Sense of Chindia: Reflections on China and India* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006).

2. Jung Chang and Jon Halliday, *Mao: The Unknown Story* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2005). According to this book, Mao thought he could depend on Stalin, since the Soviet strongman had played an important role in Mao's own rise to power.

3. Cited in Brahma Chellaney, "Fatal Attraction," *The Hindustan Times*, 22 August 2001.

4. *Ibid.*

5. H.Y. Sharada Prasad, A.K. Damodaran, and Sarvepalli Gopal, eds., *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Second Series, Vol. 29, 1 June-31 August 1955* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005). This volume, which claims to be "an indispensable reference for research into modern India," shows on page 231 that when Nehru met with Soviet Premier Marshal Nikolai Aleksandrovich Bulganin in Moscow on 22 June 1955, he told Bulganin that India did not want a seat on the UN Security Council: "Perhaps Bulganin knows that some people in USA have suggested that India should replace China in the Security Council. This is to create trouble between us and China. We are, of course, wholly opposed to it. Further, we are opposed to pushing ourselves forward to occupy certain positions because that may itself create difficulties, and India might itself become a subject of controversy. If India is to be admitted to the Security Council it raises the question of the revision of the Charter of the UN. We feel that this should not be done till the question of China's admission and possibly of others is first solved. I feel that we should first concentrate on getting China admitted."

6. Officially called the "Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India." Signed on 29 April 1954 in Beijing; ratified on 17 August 1954.

7. Item Nos. 1 and 2 in the "Notes Exchanged" concurrently with the Agreement between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India.

8. Claude Arpi, *Born in Sin: The Panchsheel Agreement—The Sacrifice of Tibet* (New Delhi: Mittal, 2004).

9. Address to the Nation on All India Radio, 22 October 1962, in *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, September 1957-April 1963*, Vol. 4 (New Delhi: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1964), 226-30.

10. *People's Day*, 11 June 2009.

11. *People's Daily*, Editorial, 14 October 2009.

12. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, "Working Together for New Glories of the Oriental Civilization," Speech at the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, 16 December 2010, http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/Chinapn_Lecture.pdf.

13. Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Qin Gang's Remarks on Asian Development Bank's Executive Board Adopting a Document Involving Disputed Territories Between China and India," Official Statement, 18 June 2009, <http://www.fmcoopr.gov.mo/eng/gsxwtb/fyrth/t568306.htm> [Accessed on 27 October 2011].

14. Roderick MacFarquhar, *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution*, Vol. 3: *The Coming of the Cataclysm 1961-1966* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

15. Edward Wong, "Ambitious Plan for China's Water Crisis Spurs Concern," *New York Times*, 2 June 2011.

16. Li Ling, *Xizang Zhi Shui Jiu Zhongguo: Da Xi Xian Zai Zao Zhongguo Zhan Lue Nei Mu Xiang Lu* (Tibet's Waters Will Save China), in Chinese (Beijing: Zhongguo chang'an chubanshe, 2005).