

## The Bilateral Relations between India and China: Analysing Convergences and Divergences

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**Abstract:** An intricately layered relationship of India and China is shaped by geography, history, culture, colonial encounters, and contemporary geopolitical and economic twists. The civilizational ties stretch back to ancient times through the Silk Route, which facilitated trade, Buddhist transmission, and sustained cultural mosaic. Despite these early connections, modern relations became complicated by the British Empire's economic strategies, the Opium Wars, and divergent national trajectories, contributing to China's "Century of Humiliation" narrative in which India is often viewed through a colonial prism. Post-independence, unresolved boundary disputes primarily, in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh has led to the 1962 India-China War and later stand-offs such as Doklam and Galwan, reinforcing mutual suspicion. Simultaneously, economic engagements have broadened rapidly since the 1990s, though marked by persistent trade imbalances, strategic distrust, and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). However, Geography continues to shape strategic reality, with the Himalayas, Tibetan Plateau, transboundary rivers, and maritime interests in the Indian Ocean central to security calculations. Further, the buffer states have deep impact on the bilateral equation, as both nations seek political leverage and connectivity advantages in these sensitive regions. Eventually, India-China relations remain an evolving blend of cooperation and contestation, influenced by competing worldviews as India's preference for multi-polarity and China's great-power ambitions making their interactions crucial for Asian stability and the emerging global order.

**Keywords:** Bilateral relations; India-China; Tradition; Border Disputes; Great Power

### Introduction

In international politics the trajectory of relationships of two countries depends on how their ties have evolved throughout the years. The bilateral relations between the two countries depend on multifarious factors. To decipher their nitty-gritty, it's required to delve into their ties to inquire each and every aspect of their relationships from vivid point of view. India and China, the two prominent countries of Asia. The two neighbouring states share an intertwined and complex relationship that continuously evolved since time

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immemorial, shaped by historical, geographical, geopolitical and economic factors. This wide-ranging and ever-changing connection between the two most populous neighbours is marked by periods of cooperation, competition, ignorance and occasional tension.

Historically, both nations have maintained cultural and economic ties that dates back to ancient era, fostering exchanges in philosophy, art and commerce along the famous Silk Road to include northern as well as southern routes. However, in recent times the modern geopolitical landscape has added new scopes to their relationship, often characterized by strategic competition and limited border skirmishes. One of the significant points of contention between India and China is the border dispute, particularly in the remote inhabitable regions as well as prominent old trade passes of the Himalayas (Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh). Their contention extends up to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), involving Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

Meanwhile, on economic aspect, the ties between the two nations have witnessed multifold growth, with both nations becoming major players in the global economy. However, economic collaboration coexists with competition, particularly in sectors such as technology and commerce. The trade imbalance, favoring Chinese exports, is a constant concern for Indian policymakers.

As far as their global outlook is concerned, India endeavors for a multipolar global world order. On the contrary, China pursues ambition for unipolar world and continuously threatens USA's major power status post-WW II. India's foreign policy aimed at strengthening ties with West Asia & North Africa (WANA) nations and South-East (SE) Asian nations, countering China's growing influence in nations hostile to China or enjoys limited ties. Contrary, China's assertive posture in the South China Sea and its expanding reach in the Indian Ocean through its "String of Pearls Strategy" aims to limit India to a regional status only and have raised security concerns for India.

The contours of India and China relationship are moulded by evolving regional dynamics and global alignments. India's aspirations for leadership beyond Asia and its deepening partnerships with Western powers, especially the United States, influence the Asian balance of power and have significant impact on India-China relations (Mohan, 2006; Malone, Mohan & Raghavan, 2015). Despite recurring tensions, both countries recognize the need for stability and dialogue. They adopted some cooperative mechanisms such as the India-China Strategic Economic Dialogue highlight efforts to manage differences and pursue shared interests [Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), n.d.]. Furthermore, globalization and the COVID-19



pandemic have further revealed the interdependence of their supply chains and the importance of collaboration in health, climate, and economic recovery (Pant & Deokar,

2021). Ultimately, the path of this complex relationship hinges on cautious management of geopolitical and economic factors, with significant implications for regional development, the Global South, and the wider global order (Garver, 2001; Swaine, 2021).

### **India and China: Cartography and Geopolitical Significance**

To understand the present status of relationships between India and China and how they have been so far, it is necessary to have their geographical positions and their geopolitical resonance analysed in detail.

India occupies a crucial maritime position, sitting at the crest of the Indian Ocean and central to the Indo-Pacific, yet remains constrained by persistent land-border tensions with Pakistan and China (Garver, 2001). These disputes, combined with internal regional divisions, have historically kept India's strategic focus land-centric, making maritime aspiration dependent on secure borders and stable relations with neighbours an aim that has reflected in its "Neighbourhood First" policy (Pant & Deokar, 2021).

On the other hand, China's geostrategic location in Asia which is entirely south of 50-degree latitude and spanning both tropical and temperate coastlines is highly advantageous. It provides China with diverse climatic benefits and access to major maritime routes (Kaplan, 2010). China has maintained a unique civilizational identity, balancing isolation with outward expansion, and seeking influence across East Asia that is evident from its historical legacy. That has been described as its own version of the Monroe Doctrine (Shambaugh, 2013). Its involvement in neighbouring regions, such as the Korean Peninsula, reflects this long-term strategic posture (Swaine, 2021).

Geographical linkages between India and China form a deep historical and cultural continuum shaped by shared landscapes and trade routes. The Himalayas act both as a formidable natural boundary between India and China and a zone of cultural interaction, particularly through Tibetan and Himalayan Buddhist exchanges (Bhaumik, 2003). The transboundary Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) river system further connects the north-eastern region of India with the Tibetan Plateau, shaping agriculture, ecology, and regional politics (Maxwell, 2012). Maritime geography also binds the two nations: the Indian Ocean has long been a corridor for trade and cultural contact, and today constitutes an arena of growing strategic interest for both countries (Holmes & Yoshihara, 2008). These land and maritime links emphasised how geography continues to influence the evolving relationship

between the two Asian powers. However, India faces a geographical dilemma shaped by diverse physical regions and porous land boundaries (Mohan, 2006).

### **Historical roots of the Elephant and the Dragon**

India and China are two of the oldest continuously existing civilisations in the world. They have gone through protracted cycles of contemporary state-building, foreign incursions, kingdom formation, and imperial consolidation. From early dynasties like the Xia, Shang, and Zhou to its first unified empire under the Qin, China underwent significant periods like the Han, Tang, Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing until changing from the Republic of China to the communist-led People's Republic in 1949 (Fairbank & Goldman, 2006; Ebrey, 2010). In a similar vein, India progressed from the urban Indus Valley Civilisation through the Vedic era, the emergence of the Mahajanapadas, and powerful empires like the Maurya and Gupta. It then underwent Islamic rule under the Delhi Sultanate and Mughals, followed by British colonial domination until independence in 1947 (Thapar, 2002; Kulke & Rothermund, 2016).

Meanwhile, the Himalayan barrier historically limited political interaction, cultural and trade linkages between the two countries. It has also persisted across Buddhist networks and Silk Route Corridors (Garver, 2001). After 1949, China's consolidation of Tibet and Xinjiang and India's integration of princely states created new geopolitical realities, shaping a modern relationship defined by both cooperation and strategic tension.

### **Conflicting Narratives of India and China During British Occupation**

The British occupation of India from the mid-18th century to 1947 reshaped India-China relations by imposing an imperial power between two ancient civilizations and binding them into an asymmetrical economic and political structure. Britain developed maritime trade networks linking India to China, through the expansion of East India Company in Bengal, Madras and Bombay, particularly, for tea, silk and porcelain, and later relied heavily on exporting Indian opium to address its trade deficit, a strategy that precipitated the Opium Wars and weakened Qing sovereignty. India, as a colonial base, thus inadvertently became central to Britain's coercive economic policies, while infrastructure projects like the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway further integrated Indian production into imperial commerce (Metcalf & Metcalf, 2006). British-led military interventions, including the participation of Indian troops in suppressing the Boxer Rebellion, reinforced Chinese perceptions of India as an auxiliary to Western imperialism, shaping



long-term psychological and political attitudes (Hevia, 2003). Meanwhile, parallel nationalist movements in China (1911 Revolution) and

India's struggle for Swaraj created shared anti-colonial aspirations but could not fully offset the mistrust generated by imperial policies (Bose & Jalal, 2017). The interplay of economic, military and ideological legacies created both structural links and lasting suspicions that continued to impact India-China relations in the post-colonial era.

### **Century of Humiliation: Chinese Perception of India**

The concept of the "Century of Humiliation" holds a central place in Chinese history, shaping its worldview and perceptions of other nations in particular British India. This period, roughly spanning from the mid-19th century to the mid-20th century, encompasses a series of events during which China faced foreign invasions, territorial losses and internal turmoil. Understanding the "Century of Humiliation" provides insights into how China views itself and other nations, including India.

China's historical grievances during the "Century of Humiliation" are rooted in a series of traumatic events, beginning with the Opium Wars, the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain, and the loss of Taiwan to Japan. This period also includes the Boxer Rebellion, the invasion of Manchuria by Japan, and the exploitation by foreign powers, such as the carving up of 'Spheres of Influence'. These events collectively fostered a deep sense of national humiliation and served as a catalyst for China's revenge, pursuit of rejuvenation and reclaiming its position on the global stage in present era.

India, as a fellow neighbour with its own history of colonial subjugation, holds a nuanced or stooge position in China's perceptions. Only in recent years, China's perception of India has undergone noteworthy changes, influenced by geopolitical, economic globalization and strategic factors. The pursuit for development economically by both nations has led to increased engagement and competition. While economic collaboration has been a driving force, particularly in trade relations, geopolitical tensions, alliances and unsettled boundary disputes like Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh, Barahoti and Nilang Valley etc. have also time and again shaped the contours of bilateral relations. The 1962 India-China War fought for about just over a month, resulting in territorial losses for India, remains a historical chapter that informs contemporary perceptions. However, some respect has been restored post the Twin Battles of Nathu La and Cho La in 1967. In recent times, stand-offs at Doklam plateau and Galwan Valley are testimony to changed and much resilient Indian Army. Such border face offs, disputes and absurd claims continue to cast a shadow on

bilateral relations, influencing public opinion on both sides. China's perception of India is also shaped by media portrayals, diplomatic interactions and public discourse. Both nations, as major global players, are scrutinized and analyzed in international forums, impacting how each is perceived by the other. Cultural diplomacy, soft power initiatives and efforts to enhance mutual understanding play a crucial role in shaping the understanding of India in China. Consequently, China's view of India is a complex interplay of historical narratives, geopolitical considerations, and contemporary interactions. As both nations navigate their roles on the global stage, the evolving perceptions will continue to be influenced by a myriad of factors, shaping the dynamics of their relationship in the 21st century.

### **Silk Route Mystery: From Historical Linkages to Modern Strategy**

The Silk Route, an ancient network of trade routes connecting China to West Asia and Europe through Central Asia, functioned as a commercial artery. Centrality and stretch of China in Asian landmass necessitated some land route lifeline for exchange of goods, literature, art and cultural practices between civilizations. This led to establishment of trade route named Silk Route, a long stretch originating in China and extending across Asia through limited corridors with favorable environment and sustenance. It has been a civilizational bridge between India and China. Its corridors enabled the movement of goods, technologies, literature, and art, fostering early interactions between the two ancient civilizations (Beckwith, 2009). The route interwove their historical trajectories and contributed to a shared cultural heritage (Sen, 2003).

The Silk Route played an important role in facilitating intellectual and religious exchanges, most notably the spread of Buddhism from India to China. Monks and scholars travelled across the region carrying sacred texts and shaping philosophical thought in East Asia (Wang, 2004). Economic exchanges like Indian spices, textiles, and gemstones flowing into China, and Chinese silk and ceramics reaching Indian markets further deepened interdependence until maritime trade became dominant (Liu, 2010). Although periodically disrupted by invasions, banditry, and shifting political landscapes, the Silk Route's resilience underscored its enduring strategic importance across centuries (Beckwith, 2009).

In contemporary geopolitics, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) seeks to revive the spirit of ancient Silk Route connectivity through renewed land and maritime corridors (Rolland, 2017). However, India's concerns as far as sovereignty and strategic imbalance particularly, in context of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), have led it to explore

alternative connectivity frameworks that safeguard national interests (Panda, 2017). The sensitivity of trade ties during bilateral tensions demonstrates how connectivity continues to shape India-China relations. Learnings from their historical Silk Route interactions, both states may benefit from recognising mutual interests and adopting a cooperative, respectful approach in navigating modern geopolitical complexities. The economic interdependence would be the groundwork for building symbiotic relationship, fostering a sense of interconnectedness and cooperation.

### **Religion, Soft Power, and Civilizational Exchange: Buddhism in India–China Relations**

Buddhism, originating in ancient India during Magadha dynasty, having roots in the teachings of Siddhartha Gautam, became one of the earliest channels of Cultural Diplomacy between India and China. The outreach of Buddhism along the Silk Road from the 1st century CE facilitated not only the spread of a religious philosophy but also helped in building sustained civilizational dialogue that shaped both societies (Thapar, 2002). Monastic centres, including the Shaolin Temple, evolved into intellectual and cultural centres where Buddhist doctrines, texts, and artistic traditions were exchanged. The translation of Indian scriptures into Chinese by scholars such as Kumarajiva deepened India-China philosophical engagement, on the other side. Indian monks like Bodhidharma influenced the rise of Chan (Zen) Buddhism during China's Tang Dynasty. That truly emphasizes the golden age of Buddhist synthesis and cultural enrichment beyond the boundaries (Zürcher, 2007).

While dynasties rose and fell, Buddhism remained constant to play a crucial role in shaping the cultural fabric of both nations. However, the decline of Buddhism in India during the medieval era largely due to the Turkish invasions, weakened this shared heritage, Buddhism remained an enduring cultural bridge that continued to shape regional identities. In the contemporary period, this legacy is inter-twined with geopolitical competition. China's strategic interest in Buddhist regions such as Tawang contrasts with India's efforts to revive ancient Buddhist linkages with Mongolia, Japan, and Central Asian nations to strengthen soft- power outreach (Bajpai, 2017). These diverging approaches like China's attempts at shaping Tibetan demography and India's promotion of transnational Buddhist networks are reflected by its realistic goal and religious significance. In any case, Buddhism remains central to the soft- power dynamics and civilizational narratives that influence India-China relations in the contemporary (Mukherjee, 2020).

## **From Dharma to Trade: The Synergy of Religious and Commercial Exchanges in India-China History**

The historical ties between India and China evolved through mutual flows of religious scholars and trade dealers who travelled along the Silk Road, carving a unique synergy between spiritual and commercial spheres. Buddhist monks from India carried scriptures and philosophical teachings to China, fostering a civilizational dialogue that has highly influenced Chinese religious thought (Deeg, 2015; Sen, 2017). Buddhist scholars as for, Bodhidharma illustrate this spiritual-cultural exchanges. Lord Buddha's teachings significantly influenced Chinese Chan Buddhism and contributed to China's broader cultural landscape (Wright, 2011). Parallel to these spiritual missions, trade caravans transported spices, textiles, and luxury goods, linking Indian and Chinese markets and reinforcing a mutually enriching cultural and economic relationship (Liu, 2010). The Tang Dynasty period further strengthened these ties when Chinese pilgrims and traders visited India, collecting Buddhist texts and knowledge on governance while simultaneously promoting bilateral commerce (Sen, 2017). This period witnessed the harmonious coexistence of spiritual enlightenment and thriving trade, solidifying the interconnectedness between the realms of religion and commerce.

In the modern era, this ancient interchange between dharma and trade continues but significantly in transformed ways. Pilgrimages to sites such as Bodhgaya and the Shaolin Temple sustain cultural and spiritual engagement, while contributing to local economies through religious tourism (Strong, 2015). Meanwhile, contemporary India-China trade relations have expanded from material goods to include technology flows, investments, and sectoral collaborations that reflect a complex harmonization of historical commercial interactions (Singh, 2020). In spite of ongoing geopolitical tensions, the inter-twined legacies of spiritual exchange and mercantile connectivity became central to understanding India-China relations, demonstrating the resilience of civilizational links that have sustained from antiquity to the present (Liu, 2016). However, challenges persist, the delicate balance between economic cooperation and political differences requires nuanced diplomacy and careful navigation.

### **Trade Ties between India and China**

As two of the world's most populous nations and emerging economic giants, their trade interactions have become increasingly complex, reflecting a delicate balance of cooperation and competition. India-China trade relations have evolved from decades of limited engagement due to political tensions and territorial disputes. After globalisation, economic interdependence took shape since the market reforms of the 1990s,



when both nations embraced it, and rapidly began exploring avenues for expanding bilateral commerce (Basant, 2015). China emerged as a dominant exporter leveraging its manufacturing resilience, while India's growing market and skilled workforce positioned it prominently as an importer, resulting in persistent trade deficit (Mehra, 2021). China's Belt and Road Initiative further aggravated economic cooperation by raising apprehensions related to strategic influence, debt vulnerabilities, and dual-use infrastructure (Rolland, 2017). Current geopolitical frictions, border tensions, and global supply chain disruptions after COVID-19 as well as India's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' policy and the 'China-Plus-One' strategy of western bloc have prompted them to recalibrate their economic engagement (Pant & Saha, 2022). Despite these challenges, trade continues to act as a crucial platform for dialogue, emphasising the need for more balanced market access, reduced asymmetries, and a stable framework to sustain future economic cooperation (Singh, 2020). Efforts to address trade imbalances, enhance market access and promote a more equitable economic partnership is need of the hour for the future of India-China trade relations which remains uncertain yet promising.

### **Variations in Political Authority: Institutional Comparison of India's Democracy and China's Communist Governance Model**

India and China epitomize two sharply divergent models of political authority, shaped by contrasting historical experiences and philosophical foundations. India, as the world's largest democracy, institutionalised a multi-party parliamentary system after independence in 1947, grounded in constitutionalism, federalism, and the protection of fundamental rights (Austin, 1999; Chhibber & Kollman, 2004). The model of democratic governance of India promotes political pluralism, electoral competition, and citizen participation through regular elections and a vibrant civil society. The federal distribution of power enables regional autonomy, reflecting the country's extraordinary cultural and linguistic diversity. Yet, India's consensus-driven politics is often constrained by coalition governments, bureaucratic inertia, corruption and persistent socio-economic inequalities, which challenge the efficiency and inclusiveness of democratic governance (Kohli, 2001).

On the other hand, China follows a single-party communist model under the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), which was established in 1949. Centralised authority, Marxist-Leninist ideology, and a party-state structure underpin its governance model, facilitating cohesive decision-making and enduring strategic planning (Lieberthal, 2015). The CCP's control over political institutions and societal spheres facilitates rapid policy implementation, contributing to China's remarkable economic transformation in recent decades often described as the "Chinese Economic Miracle" (Naughton, 2018). However, this model

restricts political pluralism, suppresses dissent, and limits freedoms of expression and association. While centralised governance has delivered sustained economic growth, China continues to confront challenges related to inequality, environmental stress, and human rights concerns, raising questions about accountability and representation in an authoritarian system (Shambaugh, 2016).

### **Comparative Analysis**

Comparing democracy in India with communism in China necessitates an exploration of the successes and shortcomings of each governance model. India's democracy, despite its challenges, has shown resilience and adaptability. The regular electoral cycles and peaceful transitions of power underscore the strength of its democratic institutions. The diversity and plurality, inherent in India's political landscape allow for a broader representation of interests, fostering a sense of inclusivity.

Meanwhile, China's communist system has enabled rapid economic development, lifting millions out of poverty. The centralized planning and state-led initiatives have contributed to infrastructural growth and technological advancements. However, the lack of political freedom and constraints on civil liberties raise concerns about individual rights and societal well-being.

### **Himalayan Geopolitics: The Strategic Relevance of Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan in India-China Rivalry**

The Himalayan region represents one of the most enigmatic geopolitical landscapes in South Asia, where Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan function as pivotal buffers shaping India-China strategic competition. These countries form a critical part of the regional puzzle, influencing and being influenced by the dynamics of India-China relations. Nepal's geographic position between the two powers, combined with deep cultural and economic ties to India and growing connectivity with China, provides it to navigate a delicate balance between the rivalries of its neighbours (Baral, 2012). While India's historical linkages ranging from open borders to extensive development cooperation that have anchored Nepal within its strategic orbit. Moving onwards, frictions such as the 2015 Madhesi blockade reinforced perceptions of overdependence on India and opened space for China's increasing engagement through infrastructure and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects (Maharjan, 2016; Zhang, 2020). Tibet, as an autonomous region of China, adds another ripple point to the rivalry. Its cultural and religious ties with India, the Dalai Lama's asylum in Dharamshala since 1959, and concerns regarding human rights and cultural erosion remain enduring sources of anxiety (Barnett, 2009). The Tibetan Plateau's strategic value especially, being the origin of major transboundary

rivers such as the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra further deepens the geopolitical stakes by inter-twining territorial, environmental, and water-security considerations (Bawa & Chellaney, 2020).

Simultaneously, Bhutan also occupies an equally critical position in the eastern Himalayas, where its long-standing partnership with India and absence of formal diplomatic ties with China shape its strategic orientation. Indo-Bhutan relations, founded on mutual confidence and extensive economic cooperation, position Bhutan as a key component of India's northern security architecture (Rose, 1977). China's efforts to resolve border disputes and cultivate direct engagement with Thimphu including claims in Doklam and the Sakteng region have raised significant geopolitical sensitivities for both Bhutan and India particularly for "Chicken's Neck" conundrum (Eckholm, 2017). The 2017 Doklam stand-off, wherein Indian forces intervened on behalf of Bhutan, underscored the criticality of the tri-junction area and the vulnerability of India's Siliguri Corridor or "Chicken's Neck" (a narrow land link connecting mainland India to its north-eastern states). Consequently, the geopolitics of Nepal, Tibet, and Bhutan illustrate how this borderland entities profoundly influence the trajectory of India-China rivalry by serving simultaneously as buffers, flashpoints, and arenas of strategic competition. Their evolving roles continue to shape the broader Himalayan balance of power and remain central to understanding the future and broader narrative of India-China relations.

### **Weaponization of Water: Power, Control, and Trans-Boundary River Politics in India-China Relations**

Water, often described as the elixir of life, has emerged not only as a determinant factor of human settlement but also as a strategic geopolitical instrument in India-China relations, particularly due to their shared dependence on Himalayan River systems. The Tibetan Plateau frequently termed the "Water Tower of Asia" that feeds major transboundary rivers such as

the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra, which sustain vast agricultural, industrial, and hydropower systems in India, while China relies heavily on the Yangtze and Yellow rivers (Chellaney, 2011; Xu et al., 2008). China's upstream control over these headwaters, accompanied by extensive dam-building and diversion plans on rivers like the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo), has heightened Indian concerns regarding flow alteration, ecological consequences, and the potential "Weaponization" of water as a coercive tool (Tsering, 2013; Ward, 2020). Despite these tensions, both states have pursued limited cooperative mechanisms, including the Expert Level Mechanism on Transboundary Rivers and the 2018 Memorandum of Understanding on hydrological data sharing, reflecting cautious recognition of the need for stability and

transparency (Mukherjee, 2018). The landscape is further complicated by China's strategic partnership with Pakistan and its infrastructural activities in the Indus basin through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, linking water disputes to wider regional geopolitics (Wolf, 2019). As climate change, glacier retreat, and population pressures intensify hydrological stress across South and Southeast Asia, collaborative early-warning systems, sustainable water governance, and scientific research will become essential to preventing resource insecurity from escalating into interstate conflict. The challenge lies in anticipating future water stress due to climate change and population growth. Sustainable water management practices, early notice systems for floods, and collaborative efforts in study and development are essential components of fostering a resilient and cooperative approach for whole of South as well as South East Asia region.

## **Conclusion**

Thus, the bilateral relations between India and China are certainly defined by several factors that have shown varying degrees of convergence and divergence. Their rich ancestral history, shared geo-economical linkages through ages, share vast boundaries and associated issues as well as strive for development for a global pole position. Major contention is the long-standing border dispute, particularly in the Himalayan region. The Line of Actual Control (LAC) obliges as a de-facto border, but differing interpretations of historical agreements and differing perceptions of the LAC have led to multiple border skirmishes. The 1962 India-China War is a stark reminder of the unresolved territorial issues.

In contemporary period, economic bonds between India and China have grown substantially. Both nations are members of the Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) group and cooperate in various international forums. However, economic collaboration is not

without its challenges. Trade imbalances, dumping, concerns over market access, and competition in certain sectors have strained economic relations. Efforts to solve these issues have been made through bilateral dialogues and forums like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

The geopolitical landscape has also witnessed India's concerns over China's increasing influence in South Asia, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). India has expressed its sovereignty reservations but China prefers their 'All Weather Ally' Pakistan over India's concern. Such foreign policy has contributed to a complex dynamic that blends cooperation with cautious competition.

Environmental concerns have also emerged as a shared concern and an area for potential collaboration. Both countries face significant environmental challenges, including air and water pollution, deforestation,



and climate change. Joint efforts to address these issues could foster cooperation and benefit not only the two nations but the entire region.

Cultural ties between both nations are deep-rooted and historically significant. Both countries have a rich heritage that includes ancient philosophies, art, and trade routes. Cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts continue to play a decisive role in fostering understanding and building bridges between the two neighbours. Both nations are developing and striving to lead the Global South as well as Third World. While India strives for a multipolar world order, China considers itself as the only challenger to the global hegemon USA in present context. While agreements and collaborations exist, the differences between two neighbours highlight the necessity for continued diplomatic efforts to address contentious issues. Regular dialogues, confidence-building measures, and a commitment to peaceful coexistence can add to stability in the region.

In conclusion, the relationship between the two neighbours is multifaceted, characterized by an amalgamation of agreements and differences. As old civilizations, the two nations must navigate challenges with long term view. A balanced and constructive approach is essential for maintaining stability in this crucial bilateral relationship.

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