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**NAVAL
POSTGRADUATE
SCHOOL**

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: A TALE OF TWO ASIAN
GIANTS**

by

Daniel J. Godkin

June 2019

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Covell F. Meyskens
Christopher P. Twomey

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SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: A TALE OF TWO ASIAN GIANTS

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, China and India have risen to prominence in the Indo-Pacific region, requiring U.S. policymakers, subject matter experts, and military officials to shift their attention toward understanding this critical relationship. The maintenance and stability of the Indo-Pacific region depend on the dynamics of the Sino-Indian relationship. Thus, a better understanding of Sino-Indian relations can have significant implications for how the U.S. strategy progresses in the Indo-Pacific region. First, to understand the 21st-century Sino-Indian relationship, this thesis analyzed the factors that led to cooperation and discord between China and India during the 1950s and early 1960s, which culminated in the 1962 border war. Second, the thesis analyzed Sino-Indian relations from 2008–2017, identifying whether factors from the 1950s and early 1960s apply to current and future Sino-Indian relations. Despite the nuances that mark both periods, the 21st-century Sino-Indian relationship has followed a similar path of cooperation, competition, and conflict, which culminated in the 2017 Doklam standoff—the longest border standoff since the 1962 border war. Overall, across both periods, this thesis found that unresolved territorial disputes, competition for energy resources, a race for regional influence, and assertive leadership have hindered cooperation. Extrapolating from the research, these factors will likely continue, creating a rocky way ahead for the Indo-Pacific region.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BDCA	Border Defense Cooperation Agreement
BPTA	Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa
CBMs	Confidence-Building Measures
ECS	East China Sea
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
LAC	Line of Actual Control
NSG	Nuclear Suppliers Group
NSS	National Security Strategy
OBOR	One Belt One Road Initiative
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
PRC	People's Republic of China
RETD	Retired
ROC	Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SCS	South China Sea
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USD	U.S. Dollar
WTO	World Trade Organization

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I. SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: A TALE OF TWO ASIAN GIANTS

China and India established their governments following World War II, with a desire to restore national identity and grow their economies and militaries. Both countries were significantly affected by Western imperialism, which sought to take advantage of China's and India's vast natural resources and human capital. Upon establishing themselves as new nation-states, China and India became forerunners of many subsequent independence movements, effectively leading to a new era of nation-and state-building. However, competition and conflict arose between them and culminated in the 1962 Border War, destroying their efforts to build cooperation. Today, the developing economic and military capabilities of both China and India, who cooperate in some areas but conflict in others, have brought emphasis to the Indo-Pacific region. Therefore, this thesis assesses the factors that led to cooperation and discord between China and India during the 1950s and early 1960s and what historical legacies portend to current and future Sino-Indian relations. Ultimately, what factors undermined Sino-Indian cooperation between 1950 and 1962 and are the same factors weakening Sino-Indian cooperation in the last decade?

Early Sino-Indian relations were best characterized as cooperative, founded on similar struggles for independence. China and India established common ground after creating of their official governments, commencing diplomatic relations in the spring of 1950. Political representatives at all levels exchanged visits between countries to expand their awareness and knowledge in the hope of developing their massive populations and ailing economies as well as creating a lasting cooperative relationship. In 1954, the Sino-Indian relationship reached its apex with the Panchsheel (the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence) agreement, which largely characterized their relationship. These principles consist of “(1) mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty, (2) mutual non-aggression, (3) mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs, (4) equality and cooperation for mutual benefit, and (5) peaceful co-existence.”¹ In light of the

¹ Gillian Hui Lynn Goh, “China and India: Towards Greater Cooperation and Exchange,” *China: An International Journal* 4, no. 2 (2006): 266, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chn.2006.0013>.

bipolar world, India and China continued to work together and desired to establish a united front comprised of newly independent states to increase diplomatic and economic opportunities. However, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, ideological differences and territorial disagreements along their shared border resulted in intense competition. Both sides disagreed on the perceived line of demarcation, which separated Tibet from India, causing discord between China and India and exacerbating misperceptions regarding their shared border. Thus, in 1962, China and India engaged in a border war that completely severed the relationship.

Contemporary Sino-Indian relations continue to reflect seeds from the past—a mix of cooperation and competition best characterizes the 21st century relationship. Globalization and the information era have brought the world closer together and created new opportunities for Sino-Indian cooperation while also magnifying issues of discord. China and India have established confidence-building measures designed to increase diplomatic, institutional, cultural, military, and economic transparency in an attempt to overcome historical legacies and build a new era of Sino-Indian cooperation. Economic interdependence and joint-institution building have shaped the current relationship as both countries seek to regain their status as great powers. For example, China’s recent creation of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is demonstrative of its attempt to create an inclusive regional economic institution that, by extension, builds cooperation with the Indians. However, despite working together, bilaterally and multilaterally these two Asian giants vie for power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region, igniting competition among them; both have top-performing economies, modernizing militaries, and partners in the region that fundamentally oppose one another. For example, the most recent border clash in the Doklam region—the longest border standoff since the 1962 border clash—reveals that deep-seated territorial issues continue to plague efforts to cooperate. In short, modern institutions, increased trade, and globalization appear to have complicated the already complex historical legacies that destroyed Sino-Indian relations in 1962.

This study elucidates the causal factors that have led to cooperation and discord between China and India from 1950–1962 and 2008–2017. These two time periods represent significant historical changes: the introduction of a bipolar world characterizes

the former, while the immediate aftermath of the financial crisis and what appears to be the beginning of China's assertiveness and the shifting of the global power balance define the latter. Arguably, these two states are the most important in the Indo-Pacific region, one being the world's largest socialist state and the other the largest democracy. They have the largest populations in the world, economies that are in the global top ten, and growing military capabilities supplemented by nuclear weapons. Therefore, understanding the factors that enabled cooperation and discord in the mid-20th century could shed light on these countries' current and future outlooks. An evaluation of their current relationship can provide valuable direction to policymakers and military officials as they plan strategically and operationally for future engagements in the Indo-Pacific region. India is aligned neither to the United States nor China, but their future alignment decision is critical to the stability of the region, the United States, and the world more broadly. Understanding the factors that have contributed to positive and negative developments in Sino-Indian relations can have significant implications on how U.S. strategy progresses in its efforts to manage China's rise.

A. SIGNIFICANCE

Understanding the relationship that China and India establish is critically important to both the region and the United States for three reasons. First, it supports the United States' National Security Strategy, specifically as it pertains to China and its role in the Indo-Pacific region. China's economic, institutional, military, and diplomatic rise has altered U.S. policy and strategy in the Indo-Pacific region. According to the most recent U.S. National Security Strategy, China threatens to "limit U.S. access to the region and ... Chinese dominance risks diminishing the sovereignty of many states in the Indo-Pacific."² The U.S. desires to strengthen its relationships with allies and partners in the region through either bilateral or multilateral alliances. Additionally, the U.S. seeks to increase its "quadrilateral cooperation with Japan, Australia, and India" to manage China's rise.³

² Donald Trump, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: White House, 2017), 46, <http://nssarchive.us/>.

³ Trump, 46.

India's increasing military and economic power can be essential elements that strengthen the U.S. position in the region to balance against China. Furthermore, the U.S. "welcome [s] India's emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defense partner."⁴ Therefore, the United States has refocused its efforts toward the Pacific to preserve the current world order, reassure allies, and protect the free flow of trade.

Second, the Sino-Indian relationship is arguably the most significant bilateral relationship in the region. David M. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee assert that "the two rising Asian powers are helping shape a new distribution of global power, as demonstrated not just by their growing prominence within the machinery of multilateral economic and security diplomacy but by the ardor with which they are courted by other international actors."⁵ In other words, while China and India are attempting to exert power and influence, regional actors are pursuing bilateral relationships with each state that may inadvertently lead to increased mistrust and mutual misperceptions concerning strategic intent. Indian Prime Minister Modi stresses that "as two major powers in the emerging world order, engagement between India and China transcends the bilateral dimension and has a significant bearing on regional, multilateral and global issues."⁶ A more cooperative partnership between India and China represents a clear and present danger to the United States and other regional neighbors that may seek to contain China. Regional states may find themselves in a precarious position as India and China work through a relationship historically characterized by mistrust. A more cooperative Sino-Indian relationship could potential reorder the region, fundamentally altering U.S. security alignments in the Indo-Pacific.

Third, a conflictual Sino-Indian relationship will certainly lead to instability in the region. Border skirmishes that have remained geographically constrained and limited in

⁴ Trump, 46.

⁵ David M. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee, "India and China: Conflict and Cooperation," *Survival* 52, no. 1 (March 2010): 154, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396331003612513>.

⁶ "Joint Statement between the India and China during Prime Minister's Visit to China," Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, accessed May 2, 2019, https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25240/Joint_Statement_between_the_India_and_China_during_Prime_Ministers_visit_to_China.

duration may ultimately escalate into high-intensity regional conflict between two nuclear states. According to Robert Farley, “a war involving India and the PRC [People’s Republic of China] would undoubtedly carry the greatest stakes, threatening to bring not only the United States into the fray, but also Pakistan and Russia.”⁷ Without the appropriate de-escalatory mechanisms, a high intensity conflict between China and India would fundamentally undermine the global economy, resulting in a dramatic reordering of the region’s security relationships. Harsh V. Pant asserts that “the future of this Asian Century will, to a large extent, depend upon the relationship between these two regional giants, and the bilateral relationship between them will define the contours of the new international political architecture in Asia and the world at large.”⁸ Therefore, deciphering issues that may impede or empower Sino-Indian cooperation and partnership is paramount to the region’s stability.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review consists of two sections, Sino-Indian relations from 1950–1962 and Sino-Indian relations from 2008 to 2017. Both sections present the prevailing scholastic interpretations of the most important factors contributing to cooperation or discord in Sino-Indian relations. Scholars contend that western imperial victimization bred the desire in both nations to establish a new diplomatic approach to international relations characterized by cooperation rather than by conflict. However, scholars argue that territorial disputes concerning China and India’s shared border and Prime Minister Nehru’s aggressive “Forward Policy” ultimately led to conflict and a deterioration of Sino-Indian relations.

⁷ Robert Farley, “This Is How Bad a U.S.-China War Would Be (In 2030),” *National Interest*, September 5, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/how-bad-us-china-war-would-be-2030-30532>.

⁸ Harsh V. Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2014), IX.

1. 1950-1962 Sino-Indian Relations

a. *Early Sino-Indian Diplomatic Cooperation*

Early Sino-Indian relations are best characterized as cooperative strategies that ran counter to the international and regional order. As Amardeep Athwal explains, in April of 1950, “India was the first non-socialist country to establish formal diplomatic relations with the PRC.”⁹ India’s diplomatic recognition of the PRC contradicted the regional as well as the, international norms, which favored the Republic of China (ROC). Furthermore, India continually advocated for United Nations Security Council (UNSC) recognition of the PRC over the ROC until 1962. During this period, high-level leadership visits further strengthened this burgeoning relationship.

In June 1954, these visits culminated in the Panchsheel agreement, which established the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. These principles underscored respect for another state’s sovereign territory through non-interference and non-aggression, which should yield peaceful coexistence.¹⁰ China and India envisioned that these principles would underpin the foundation of a new diplomatic approach to international relations. Sidhu and Yuan assert that “in many ways, the 1954 agreement paved the way for improved relations between the two countries.”¹¹ Ultimately, China and India were committed to maintaining a political order that prevented another historical period of imperialist control.

Following the 1954 Panchsheel agreement, China and India presented the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to the countries present at the Bandung Conference, which further cemented their relationship and vision for the future. The Bandung Conference was held in Indonesia in April of 1955 and was the first ever Afro-Asian conference. Han Nianlong contends that the Bandung Conference “represented the

⁹ Amardeep Athwal, *China-India Relations: Contemporary Dynamics*, Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20.

¹⁰ “Text of Statement by Chou and Nehru,” *New York Times*, June 29, 1954, sec. Archives, <https://www.nytimes.com/1954/06/29/archives/text-of-statement-by-chou-and-nehru.html>.

¹¹ Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu and Jing Dong Yuan, *China and India: Cooperation or Conflict?* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003), 13.

common struggle of the Asian and African peoples to safeguard their national independence, preserve world peace, and promote friendly cooperation and thus served as a great impetus to unity and progress.”¹² The 1955 Bandung Conference marked the pinnacle of Chinese and Indian cooperation and served to support the eventual creation of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement served as a platform on which those countries that did not seek to align with the new bipolar world—communist or capitalist, Soviet Union or the United States—could come together under universal principles and peacefully seek their own path to success. Itty Abraham asserts that “Non-alignment is most often represented as a counter-hegemonic critic of contemporary world order or a rhetorical justification for the maximization of national interest.”¹³ Shri Prakash asserts that “both countries sympathized deeply with their respective popular struggles for ending colonialism.”¹⁴ At the root of these international advancements were Chinese and Indian national interests best characterized by the Panchsheel agreement, which emphasized a commitment to territorial integrity, non-aggression, non-interference, and equality. India’s espousal of nonalignment was critical to its relationship with the non-aligned states and strategically positioned India to remain neutral toward the United States and the Soviet Union. China and India thus formed a stronger relationship on the common basis of supporting and sustaining the principles that gave forth the non-aligned movement.

b. Territorial Disputes: Sino-Indian Relations in Ruins

Conflicting interpretations over maps and lines of demarcation dissolved cooperation and ultimately led to the 1962 war. Neville Maxwell explains that “the border dispute proper surfaced when China publicized the completion of a motorable road across

¹² Nianlong Han, ed., *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 1st ed (Hong Kong: New Horizon Press, 1990), 660.

¹³ Itty Abraham, “From Bandung to NAM: Non-Alignment and Indian Foreign Policy, 1947–65,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 46, no. 2 (April 2008): 195, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662040801990280>.

¹⁴ Shri Prakash, “India - China Relations: A Comparative View of The 1950s and Early 1990s,” *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 52, no. 3 (July 1996): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1177/097492849605200301>.

Aksai Chin, linking Sinkiang with western Tibet.”¹⁵ Sino-Indian analysis of the border led each state to conclude that the other state was infringing on its sovereignty, specifically concerning the McMahon Line. The McMahon Line was established in 1914 during the Simla Convention, in which British and Tibetan representatives signed an agreement that divided Tibet between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, the McMahon Line was categorically considered an illegal device that imperial states used to undermine Chinese sovereignty. As Sheikh Mohd Arif has stressed, “China argued that local Tibetan authorities had no legal rights to conclude any border treaty with the British.”¹⁶ From the Indian perspective, the McMahon Line created cartographically sovereign Indian territorial borders that, which China actively ignored and violated. Thus, the Tibetan divide is the single most critical aspect of friction between China and India, leading to the Tibetan revolt.

In March of 1959, Tibetan separatist revolts targeted Chinese forces that India considered to be occupation forces. Chen Jian argues that “from the time the Chinese Communists asserted control of Tibet in 1951, profound political, social, and ethnic conflict has divided the communist authorities from Tibet’s aristocratic and monastic elites, as well as from many ordinary Tibetans.”¹⁷ Chinese occupation and the resulting political division created the environment that ultimately led to the Tibetan revolt in the spring of 1959. Xuecheng Liu argues that “the Tibetan rebellion was the catalyst of the existing tension in the relations between China and India,”¹⁸ which hinged on the legal status of Tibet. Liu continues by explaining that “Chinese policy-makers believed that India was representing a threat from the imperialist West on the western frontier of China and that India was meddling in China’s Tibetan affairs.”¹⁹ The status of Tibet put China and India

¹⁵ Neville Maxwell, “Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 34, no. 15 (1999): 910.

¹⁶ Sheikh Mohd Arif, “A History of Sino-Indian Relations: From Conflict to Cooperation,” *International Journal of Political Science and Development* 1, no. 4 (December 2013): 131–32.

¹⁷ Jian Chen, “The Tibetan Rebellion of 1959 and China’s Changing Relations with India and the Soviet Union,” *Journal of Cold War Studies* 8, no. 3 (July 31, 2006): 99.

¹⁸ Xuecheng Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1994), 25.

¹⁹ Liu, 25–26.

on a collision course, as Nehru and Mao were unwilling to adjust territorial policies that would inevitably produce conflict.

In November 1961 Nehru adopted the “Forward Policy,” which, according to Andrew Kennedy, was Nehru’s strategy to “increase the pressure on China ... Under this approach, India would establish outposts up to, and sometimes beyond, Chinese positions in the disputed areas.”²⁰ According to Xuecheng Liu, the genesis of this policy was rooted in Nehru’s 1959 policy known as the non-recognition and non-negotiation policy.²¹ The Forward Policy was a strategy that attempted to reassert India’s sovereignty over disputed border areas gradually, the objective of which was “to prevent the Chinese advance and ... establish the physical presence of Indian troops.”²² However, the policy backfired as China responded with its own assertively punitive policy.

As a result of Nehru’s Forward Policy, China adopted an opposing policy of armed coexistence along the border. The Forward Policy was the impetus that would inevitably lead to the 1962 Sino-Indian War and fundamentally alter Sino-Indian relations for decades to come. John Garver stresses that “The PLA’s [People’s Liberation Army] drive to the southern foothills of the Himalayas had a profound effect on Indian opinion. China became a nemesis of India ranked only after Pakistan. Even forty-some years after the war this sentiment remains significant in India.”²³ Thus, the Sino-Indian border war marked the official deterioration of Sino-Indian relations.

2. 2008-2017 Sino-Indian Relations

The following review captures the central scholarly debates concerning the last decade of the Sino-Indian relationship. Although the relationship has grown more complex, similar factors that plagued the relationship in the mid-20th century continue to linger and

²⁰ Andrew Bingham Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru: National Efficacy Beliefs and the Making of Foreign Policy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 229.

²¹ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 31.

²² Liu, 31.

²³ John Garver, “China’s Decision for War with India in 1962,” in *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy*, ed. Alastair I. Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006), 117.

damage current Sino-Indian relations, which include border disputes and regional competition. Overall, this section highlights how Sino-Indian relations have matured, through economic interdependence and joint institution-building, as well as through increased diplomatic overtures and military relations. However, this section also reveals that unbalanced trade, and competition along the shared border and in the Indian Ocean Region remain areas of potential conflict.

a. Economic Interdependence: Cooperation or Conflict

Many scholars argue that economic interdependence leads to cooperation. According to Bruce Russett and John O’Neal, “countries that are interdependent bilaterally or economically open to the global economy, whether democratic or not, have an important basis for pacifist relations and conflict resolution.”²⁴ The theory of economic interdependence is well established and rooted in qualitative and quantitative data that demonstrates the power it has to breed cooperation. China and India engage in a significant amount of bilateral trade and participate in a number of multilateral economic forums. David Scott notes that China became India’s largest trade partner in 2008, indicating increasing levels of economic interdependence.²⁵ A significant element of China’s and India’s increasing bilateral trade is the idea of complementary economic goods. Yasheng Huang asserts that “China has the hardware and India has the software. One excels in manufacturing, the other in service industries.”²⁶ Huang adds that “the 21st century belongs to Asia, and the future of Asia belongs to China and India.”²⁷ Economic integration is a substantial factor showing quantitatively how these two Asian giants are cooperating to reorient the region potentially. Furthermore, China and India have gradually found pathways of cooperation, working through multilateral economic forums and

²⁴ Bruce M. Russett and John R. O’Neal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001), 155.

²⁵ David Scott, “Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century,” *Asian Security* 4, no. 3 (September 23, 2008): 260, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799850802306468>.

²⁶ Yasheng Huang, “The Myth of Economic Complementarity in Sino-Indian Relations,” *Journal of International Affairs; New York* 64, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 114.

²⁷ Huang, 122.

institutions. Nilanjan Ghosh and associates assert that “China and India have cooperated with each other at the WTO [World Trade Organization] on many issues despite their bilateral differences, forming a common south-centric agenda on certain key areas of negotiations.”²⁸ China and India have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate their resolve concerning critical economic issues that pertain to all of East and South Asia—essentially acting as a force that speaks up for the entirety of the Indo-Pacific region.

However, just as economic interdependence has created opportunities for cooperation, it has simultaneously aggravated issues of discord due to reciprocal misunderstandings, which, in turn, contribute to strategic mistrust. Chietigj Bajpae contends that the “economic imbalance in the bilateral relationship has been a further catalyst for mutual misperception between both countries. At present, the Chinese economy is almost three times the size of the Indian economy in terms of purchasing power.”²⁹ Bilateral economic engagement is a critical factor in strong state-to-state relationships, but a significant imbalance can fundamentally alter a state’s calculus. Rajesari Rajagopalan and Arka Biswas explain that “data from the Indian Ministry of Commerce shows that India’s trade deficit with China for FY 2015–16 was estimated to be US\$52.7 billion, a significant increase from US\$1.08 billion in FY 2001–02. A trade imbalance has thus resulted in India’s overdependence on China, giving the latter potentially greater leverage.”³⁰ Alternatively, Rajagopalan and Biswas assert that “India has implemented measures to keep Chinese companies out of the telecommunications infrastructure,” due to mounting evidence that indicates that Chinese telecommunication companies may have malicious intent.³¹ Chietigj Bajpae argues that “while the Sino-Indian relationship has improved in recent years, it continues to oscillate between periods of cordiality and

²⁸ Nilanjan Ghosh et al., “China-India Relations in Economic Forums: Examining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership,” (occasional paper, Observer Research Foundation, August 2018), 9.

²⁹ Chietigj Bajpae, “China-India: Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (2015): 116.

³⁰ Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan and Arka Biswas, “India–China Relations under Xi Jinping: An Indian Perspective,” *China: An International Journal* 15, no. 1 (February 2017): 121.

³¹ Rajagopalan and Biswas, 123.

competition. This is exacerbated by a fundamental mismatch of threat perceptions between both states.”³² In short, the extensive literature argues that despite bilateral trade and similar interests in multilateral economic forums, the Sino-India relationship is an unbalanced relationship marred by discord and undermined by mutual mistrust.

b. *Institutional Participation: Cooperation or Competition*

Many scholars have noted that institutions act as mechanisms that help build cooperation through shared common interests.³³ There are three primary institutions that scholars point to that are indicative of Sino-Indian cooperation: Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), and BRICS.³⁴ However, a counterpoint to this cooperation is their competition within the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). Each of these organizations is representative of the different institutional factors that lead China and India to cooperate or compete. Bilateral cooperation on security and trade that deepens the Sino-Indian relationship should, in turn, result in long-term benefits, increasing trust and improving mutual perceptions. Despite recent progress in the SCO, AIIB, and BRICS, competition in the international and regional domain have undercut confidence-building measures that support cooperation.

In the last decade, the two most prominent instances of Sino-Indian institutional competition are China’s decision to block India from joining the NSG and India’s bid for a permanent seat on the UNSC. Saira Bano describes the NSG as a “multinational body that aims to prevent nuclear exports for peaceful purposes from being used to make nuclear weapons.”³⁵ China’s continued efforts to block India’s accession into NSG in the face of

³² Bajpaee, “China-India,” 108.

³³ Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 63–64.

³⁴ Leslie Elliott Armijo, “The BRICS Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, And China) As Analytical Category: Mirage or Insight?,” *Asian Perspective* 31, no. 4 (2007): 7; Charalampos Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance: The Politics of Ambivalent Reform,” *International Politics* 53, no. 2 (March 2016): 245, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2015.44>. BRICS is the accepted acronym for the group of the following five countries: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

³⁵ Saira Bano, “India and Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) Membership,” *Global Change, Peace & Security* 27, no. 2 (May 4, 2015): 123, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14781158.2015.998992>.

international support is evidence of institutional competition that undermines bilateral cooperation. Rajagopalan and Biswas emphasize that allowing India in the NSG, “would mean acceptance of India as a peer—a notion which Beijing has traditionally remained uncomfortable with.”³⁶ The UNSC is one of six components of the United Nations and is responsible for the preservation of international peace and security, as well as peacekeeping and sanctioning. Charalampos Efstathopoulos points out, “with the exception of China, the permanent members of the UNSC all declare their support for India’s candidacy.”³⁷ India’s bid for great power status hinges on acceptance into international institutions such as these, and China’s continued efforts to subvert India’s acceptance negatively impacts potential cooperation in the long-term.

Despite China’s refusals, India’s emergence as the largest democracy and a top-performing economy is mostly considered by the global community reason enough to accept India into the UNSC and NSG. Some argue that the Sino-Pakistani relationship and India’s deepening ties with Japan have influenced China’s strategic positioning on India. Umbreen Javaid asserts that “Pakistan and China’s time-tested friendly and strategic ties also help to contain Indian influence.”³⁸ Additionally, Vinya Kaura argues that another factor driving China “is India’s solidarity with Japan, China’s arch rival.”³⁹ China’s strategic positioning on India’s bid for a permanent seat demonstrates the strategic mistrust and breakdown of cooperation between the two states.

c. Confidence-Building Measures: Military Cooperation, Diplomatic Exchanges, and Border Agreements

China and India have engaged in confidence-building measures (CBMs) to increase bilateral cooperation since 1993, following the signing of the Border Peace and Tranquility

³⁶ Rajagopalan and Biswas, “India–China Relations under Xi Jinping: An Indian Perspective,” 125.

³⁷ Charalampos Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance: The Politics of Ambivalent Reform,” *International Politics* 53, no. 2 (March 2016): 253, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ip.2015.44>.

³⁸ Umbreen Javaid, “China’s Interests and Challenges in South Asia,” *South Asian Studies* 31, no. 2 (December 2016), 462.

³⁹ Vinya Kaura, “China on India’s UNSC Bid: Neither Yes or No,” *The Diplomat*, accessed September 9, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/china-on-indias-uns-c-bid-neither-yes-nor-no/>.

Agreement (BPTA). According to the literature, there are two essential elements. As Manoj Joshi asserts, the BPTA first “sought to promote peace through specific modes of conduct of the two-armed forces. Second, it called for a reduction—on both sides—of the forces and deployments to a ‘minimum level,’ based on the principle ‘mutual and equal security.’”⁴⁰ The agreement was subsequently revisited in 1996, 2005, and 2006 with the intent of reducing arms and personnel along the border, standardizing operating procedures along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and conducting joint military exercises. At the heart of CBMs are the military-to-military cooperation; however, CBMs have expanded to include diplomatic and civil elements.

The establishment of Special Representatives and cultural exchange programs mark a significant step toward conflict resolution. Chietigj Bajpae contends that “the propensity for misunderstanding is ... fueled by limited people-to-people contacts, cultural barriers, and rising levels of nationalism that accompany the growing international clout of both countries.”⁴¹ Therefore, the annual Special Representatives meetings and cultural exchange programs demonstrate a willingness to establish interpersonal relationships that can promote stronger Sino-Indian cooperation. Harsh Pant asserts that “bilateral-political as well as socio-cultural exchanges are at an all-time high.”⁴² In 2015, Prime Minister Modi and Premier Li agreed to add an additional Consulate General in each other’s country. Furthermore, both sides believe that the India-China Cultural Exchange initiative has increased mutual trust and cooperation.

Under the umbrella of CBMs, in 2013, China and India agreed on the Border Defense Cooperation Agreement (BDCA), which brought the two sides together under an accepted framework that could mitigate the risk of future border conflicts. Manoj Joshi states that “this agreement reiterated the previous agreements and enhanced the interactions

⁴⁰ Manoj Joshi, “The Wuhan Summit and the India–China Border Dispute,” Special Report (New Delhi: Observer Research Foundation, June 2018), 4, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/41880-the-wuhan-summit-and-the-india-china-border-dispute/>.

⁴¹ Bajpae, “China-India,” 115.

⁴² Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, V.

of the military operations departments and the defense ministries.”⁴³ Furthermore, during the 2018 Wuhan Summit, China and India’s leadership reiterated similar verbiage from the BDCA by stating that they desire “peace and tranquility along the India-China border.”⁴⁴ The BDCA and the more recent Wuhan Summit both affirm China’s and India’s intent to peacefully coexist and form long-term bonds of cooperation.

d. Confidence-Building Measures: Unable to Bridge the Gap

On the other hand, China’s naval modernization has created widespread fear within the Indo-Pacific region and growing concern among India’s military and policymakers. Rajagopalan and Biswas state that “for India, Chinese naval expansion rings warning bells as China has rapidly increased its naval presence in the Indian Ocean.”⁴⁵ The broad consensus is that China’s overseas military basing projects correlating to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as well as its support for Pakistan undergird India’s concern. As a result of Indian fears, Katherine Morton asserts that “India is tilting towards stronger defense cooperation with the United States, Japan, and Australia in a bid to counter the buildup of Chinese military activities in the Indian Ocean.”⁴⁶ The quadrilateral alliance was agreed to in 2007, but dissolved after a year. However, the Finnish Institute of International Affairs published a recent article contending that “China’s assertive actions in the South China Sea ... and China’s growing influence through the BRI in its neighborhood” has reinvigorated efforts to rebuild the quadrilateral security agreement.⁴⁷ Ivan Lidarev asserts that “Beijing has opposed the Quad as a potential anti-Chinese alliance of democracies aimed at containing it and checking its maritime rise in the Indo-Pacific.”⁴⁸ China’s continued rise

⁴³ Joshi, “The Wuhan Summit and the India–China Border Dispute,” 6.

⁴⁴ Joshi, 6.

⁴⁵ Rajagopalan and Biswas, “India–China Relations under Xi Jinping: An Indian Perspective,” 134.

⁴⁶ Katherine Morton, “China’s Ambition in the South China Sea: Is a Legitimate Maritime Order Possible?,” *International Affairs* 92, no. 4 (2016): 931, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12658>.

⁴⁷ “The US-Japan-India-Australia Quadrilateral Security Dialogue,” Finnish Institute of International Affairs, May 21, 2018, <https://www.fiia.fi/en/publication/the-us-japan-india-australia-quadrilateral-security-dialogue>.

⁴⁸ Ivan Lidarev, “2017: A Tough Year for China-India Relations,” *The Diplomat*, accessed April 3, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/2017-a-tough-year-for-china-india-relations/>.

and naval modernization and India's participation in the resurgent Quad will inevitably produce conflict that undermines cooperation and partnership.

For all the cooperation achieved as result of special representatives and cultural exchanges, Sino-Indian diplomatic relations have deteriorated as China has grown increasingly close with Pakistan and employed subversive visa procedures that challenge Indian territorial sovereignty. Harsh Pant and Pushan Das stress that the "China-Pakistan 'axis' has always been a source of greater consternation for New Delhi. This nexus between Islamabad and Beijing has only grown stronger in recent years."⁴⁹ This relationship directly contributes to strategic mistrust and undermines CBMs. Furthermore, China has opted for a coercive diplomatic mechanism that uses visas as a tool to impose territorial claims. China denied visas from Arunachal Pradesh and modified the visas of applicants from Jammu and Kashmir. Rajagopalan and Biswas argue that this behavior is viewed "as Beijing's policy of asserting its sovereignty and challenging India's territorial integrity."⁵⁰ The actions of China in regard to Pakistan and visas frustrate diplomatic efforts and create further mistrust and discord in the complicated Sino-Indian relationship.

Territorial disputes and sovereignty challenges continue to weaken the foundation of Sino-Indian cooperation. In 2013, 2014, and, most recently, in 2017, China and India have had stand-offs along their shared border. Abhijit Singh explains that China utilizes psychological warfare tactics to coerce regional states to capitulate territory and anything else China deems a core interest.⁵¹ Frank O'Donnell asserts that, in turn, these activities "propel India's growing defense collaboration with the United States and Japan."⁵² However, in order to combat China's perceived aggression, India pursued a strategy 2017 that attempted to block strategic road construction in Bhutan that ultimately resulted in the

⁴⁹ Harsh V. Pant and Pushan Das, "China's Military Rise and the Indian Challenge," in *Defence Primer: An Indian Military in Transformation?*, ed. Pushan Das and Harsh V. Pant, 2018, 7, https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Defence_Primer_2018.pdf.

⁵⁰ Rajagopalan and Biswas, "India-China Relations under Xi Jinping: An Indian Perspective," 128.

⁵¹ Abhijit Singh, "China's 'Three Warfares' and India," *Journal of Defense Studies* 7, no. 4 (2013), 27, https://idsa.in/system/files/jds_7_4_AbhijitSingh.pdf.

⁵² Frank O'Donnell, "Stabilizing Sino-Indian Security Relations: Managing the Strategic Rivalry After Doklam," *Carnegie-Tsinghua Center for Global Policy*, June 2018, 21.

74-day Doklam standoff. The Doklam border standoff is a micro issue that represents a larger conflict concerning territory and sovereignty. Joshi asserts that “the border issue can poison the bilateral relationship ... and render the relationship building efforts ineffectual.”⁵³ Moreover, India’s support of Tibet undermines Chinese sovereignty and territorial claims. Joshi explains that “the Tibetan uprising on the eve of the Olympic Games in Beijing in 2008 convinced China that India remained a threat.”⁵⁴ In short, these issues of territory and sovereignty remain deeply entrenched in the psyche of New Delhi and Beijing elite, and may be the most influential factors hindering cooperation between these two Asian giants.

C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Hypothesis 1: Sino-Indian discord is a result of unresolved territorial disputes, which is the predominant factor that destabilizes the Sino-Indian relationship. The Sino-Indian Border war of 1962 and numerous standoffs over the last decade, including Depsang in 2013, Chumar in 2014, and, most recently, Doklam in 2017, all serve as a reminder of the significant divide that exists between China and India. Regardless of the attempt to build a framework of peaceful coexistence, China and India, like any other states, are concerned about threats to territorial sovereignty. This concern is magnified by their recent history of being colonized by Western states. Thus, China and India are unwilling and ideologically disinclined to relent on the issue of border demarcation and, as such, confidence-building measures and diplomatic overtures are unable to address the systemic issue within the strategic relationship. Evidence of militarization along their shared border is a clear indicator of potential conflict. Furthermore, assertive new policies, from either side, regarding Tibet, Aksai Chin, and Arunachal Pradesh may lead each side to another clash.

Hypothesis 2: Conflicting interpretations of India’s relationship with the West and China’s relationship with Pakistan have led each side to enact divergent foreign policy

⁵³ Joshi, “The Wuhan Summit and the India–China Border Dispute,” 3.

⁵⁴ Joshi, 8.

agendas that undermine cooperation and partnership. From India's 1961 Forward Policy to the recent resurgence of the Quadrilateral Alliance, China perceives India's actions as strategies to contain, limit, or deter Chinese expansion in the region. Meanwhile, India views China's partnership with Pakistan and China's expanding economic influence as coercive elements that run counter to India's geostrategic interests and challenge India's emergence as a great power. Therefore, opposing perceptions, cemented by historical legacies and amplified by mistrust, serve only to ensure that neither will fundamentally accept a more cooperative relationship than is currently the status quo. Evidence of any increase in U.S.-Indian relations or Sino-Pakistani relations concerning diplomatic, military, economic, and institutional arrangements could lead to further mistrust and agitate historical legacies, leading to deeper conflict.

Hypothesis 3. Continued economic interdependence can create an environment that produces cooperation and a stronger partnership. Trade liberalization between China and India could be the single most important factor that suppresses conflict, thus enabling a more cooperative environment. As a result of complementary markets, trade between the two countries has steadily increased. China and India participate in a number of bilateral and multilateral economic forums, which reveals shared common interests and may decrease the likelihood of conflict. China and India are the two largest states in the Indo-Pacific region and play critical roles in the World Trade Organization (WTO), BRICS, and other institutions, which can help overcome historical legacies that have hindered Sino-Indian relations in the past. Therefore, economic interdependence has the seeds to produce cooperation despite systemic differences. Evidence of decreasing the trade imbalance and lifting any trade tariffs could concede an increase in cooperation. If China or India increases Foreign Direct Investment, it could potentially signify a deepening of cooperative relations. Furthermore, growth in the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, which could include India signing onto the Belt and Road Initiative, would demonstrate a clear path to future long-term cooperation.

Hypothesis 4. Evidence indicates that confidence building measures focused on the inclusivity of regional institutions, integrated military exercises, and cultural/diplomatic exchanges have helped improve these two Asian giants' relations during the first two

decades of the 21st century. Chinese-led institutions such as the SCO and AIIB, which both include India, demonstrate that both have similar interests and visions for security and economics in the region. Furthermore, joint military exercises broaden Chinese and Indian cooperation, which has displayed increased levels of trust and compatibility on the battlefield. Additionally, the cultural exchanges can assist in shedding light on the rich ancient history that China and India share, which captures the roots of their cooperation. Ultimately, as China and India continue to work toward better diplomatic, institutional, cultural, and military relations, it increases the probability that they can overcome their differences and work together to regain their perceived status as great powers in the international world order. Evidence of increased dialogue, face-to-face meetings, and new policy agreements pertaining to the established confidence-building measures will demonstrate increased cooperation.

D. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis is organized to analyze the military, diplomatic, economic, and institutional factors that have led to cooperation and discord in the Sino-Indian relationship. Due to the globalized nature of the world, states are more interconnected through diplomatic, economic, institutional, and military forums where cooperation or competition can exist. Thus, analyzing the Sino-Indian relationship through these aspects best captures the complexity of the relationship and can shed light on those factors that are most likely to define the relationship. The critical first step in this thesis is to provide a historical analysis of the relationship following the establishment of their official governments from 1950 and the ensuing breakdown in 1962. Understanding what factors led to the rise and fall of the relationship in the 1950s aids the analysis of Sino-Indian relations from the onset of the 21st century to 2017.

This research is designed to add to the existing scholarly literature concerning Sino-Indian relations, which project to be extremely important to the 21st century as they are the rising powers in the Indo-Pacific. Furthermore, this study employs evidence drawn from a qualitative analysis of scholarly literature, as well as from open source reporting from Chinese and Indian elites, politicians, military leaders, and business magnates. This thesis

also relies heavily on government-produced material by the Chinese and Indians, as well as media accounts that offer particular insights into the actions of both governments. The qualitative analysis examines Sino-Indian relations across the spectrum of political, economic, military, and institutional competition and cooperation.

E. OVERVIEW AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter II is an examination of the diplomatic, institutional, and military parameters that China and India pursued in the earliest stages of their bilateral relationship that compelled cooperation but ended in conflict. This chapter emphasizes the success of Sino-Indian cooperation in regard to the Panchsheel Agreement and the Bandung Conference, juxtaposed against the failure of border policy that culminated in the Sino-Indian Border War of 1962. Critical to the chapter is the identification of those elements that may be present in today's increasingly complex Sino-Indian relationship. These identified factors are used to develop a framework for the subsequent chapter.

Chapter III is an examination of Sino-Indian relations from 2008–2017 which each state has experienced unprecedented economic growth and rapidly expanding spheres of influence. As a result of the confluence of economic and military expansion, Sino-Indian relations are strained by the increasing weight to shoulder a more significant share of regional responsibility. As these two Asian giants struggle to find their footing in an era of great power competition, the issues of bilateral cooperation have taken center stage. Chapter III assesses specifically a decade of Sino-Indian relations that are ever more complex, mature and deep, in an attempt to forecast whether long-term cooperation is realistic. The chapter analyzes critical areas in which the Chinese and Indians have found avenues of cooperation but, due to mutual mistrust, are unable to maintain those gains. The determination for long-term sustainable cooperation is based on the factors identified in Chapter II that resulted in failed Sino-Indian relations.

Chapter IV concludes the thesis research. The chapter offers the main findings of the research and briefly discusses the significance and implications for the bilateral, regional, and international domains. In short, Sino-Indian relations will be the center of political discourse for decades to come.

II. THE MAKING AND DESTROYING OF HINDI CHINI BHAIBHAI SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS 1950–1962

China and India have enjoyed a rich history that dates back to the first and second millennia, when both civilizations ruled East and South Asia. During that time, China's and India's positions as centers of the region alternated back and forth. Over the course of this time, China and India established a cooperative, complementary, and cordial relationship predicated on shared religion, scientific learning, culture, and traded goods. However, as time progressed and the world grew more interconnected through the process of industrialization, China's and India's positions in the world dramatically changed. China and India suffered at the hands of European powers: India became a colony of Britain, while China was controlled by unequal treaties imposed by Western powers and ravaged by Japan. Throughout this shared experience, China's and India's bilateral relationship did not dramatically change; instead, they maintained similar visions for the future, which hinged on gaining independence and, eventually, reestablishing their greatness within the region and the world more broadly.

This chapter explores China's and India's independence and establishment of their official governments and analyzes the complex relationship from *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*, a Hindu phrase championed by Nehru meaning 'China and India are brothers,' highlighting a spirit of strong comradery that drastically shifted, resulting in the 1962 border war. The first section analyzes China's and India's relationship that led to the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence, focusing on the factors that fostered and led to cooperation between China and India from 1950–1955. These factors include a legacy of common struggle at the hands of Western imperialism; common pressures due to the advent of the bipolar world; and common regional and global security concerns, which culminated in the historic Bandung Conference. The second section examines issues that resulted in competition and hostility between China and India from 1956–1959. These issues include competition for regional influence and unresolved territorial claims. The final section assesses the enduring rivalry between China and India concerning unresolved territorial disputes, exacerbated by domestic and international factors, which contributed to the 1962 border war. Overall, this

chapter finds that although Sino-Indian relations in this period appeared promising, the relationship was fragile at best, highlighting that territorial sovereignty and divergent national interests proved too much to overcome.

A. THE BIRTH OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE 1950–1955

There are three factors that characterize early Sino-Indian cooperation: Western imperialism, the advent of the bipolar world, and similar regional and global security concerns. Following World War II and its aftermath—the disintegration of empires and decolonization—India and China envisioned a new world where they could reestablish their greatness, absent of Western influence. John Garver asserts that “the [Republic of India] and the [People’s Republic of China] felt a strong sense of mission toward the developing countries. Both felt, with considerable justice, that their own national struggles had played an extremely important role in bringing about the collapse of colonialism.”⁵⁵ Furthermore, Garver highlights that “these common anti-imperialist and anti-Western sentiments were a key basis of the period of Chinese-Indian solidarity in the mid-1950s.”⁵⁶ Additionally, Sheikh Arif asserts that “[Prime Minister Jawaharlal] Nehru greeted the birth of communist China in October with great pomp,” demonstrating the optimism emanating from India that the future of Asia was bright.⁵⁷ This period is commonly referred to as *Hindi, Chini, Bhai Bhai*, which translates to ‘India and China are brothers.’⁵⁸ Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu and Jing-dong Yuan stress that this was a period “marked by euphoria and cordiality, [during which] the territorial claims were largely overlooked as the two countries were preoccupied with global and regional issues bearing on their security.”⁵⁹ Therefore, despite differences in government systems—democracy vs. socialism—and

⁵⁵ John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2001), 111.

⁵⁶ Garver, 15.

⁵⁷ Arif, “History of Sino-Indian Relations,” 131.

⁵⁸ Sergey Radchenko, “The Rise and Fall of Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), accessed November 13, 2018, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/18/the-rise-and-fall-of-hindi-chini-bhai-bhai/>.

⁵⁹ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 12.

ideologies—liberalism vs. communism—and contradictory territorial claims, India and China found common ground, leading to significant bilateral relations.

The first signs of cooperation occurred in 1950 when India engaged in foreign policy strategies that ran counter to the international and regional order. In 1950, official diplomatic relations between the newly established governments of Beijing and New Delhi hinged on the potential for both to influence the region and the world more broadly. Amardeep Athwal explains that in April of 1950, “India was the first non-socialist country to establish formal diplomatic relations with the PRC [People’s Republic of China].”⁶⁰ Within the UNSC the majority of the members did not recognize the PRC as the government to China, instead favoring the Republic of China. India’s position on the matter represents a stark contrast to international consensus, demonstrating a strong inclination by India toward the PRC. Although India was quick to establish relations with China, China was hesitant and questioned India’s overall motives. Sidhu and Yuan explain that “Mao was less than forthcoming; Beijing initially referred to the Indian government as a puppet of imperialism and an obstacle to movements for national liberation.”⁶¹ However, India’s continual advocacy for United Nations Security Council recognition of the PRC over the ROC, demonstrated to the PRC that India was more aligned with anti-imperialist rhetoric than initially perceived.⁶² Additionally, Xuecheng Liu asserts that “in terms of the interests of Chinese strategic security, India played a mediating role during the Korean War, advocated China’s representation in the United Nations and supported China on the question of integration of Taiwan with the mainland.”⁶³ Thus, India’s support for the PRC ran counter to the regional and international norms, which favored the ROC.⁶⁴

The second step toward increased cooperation occurred as a result of the newly established bipolar international order; India, more so than China, was put in a precarious

⁶⁰ Athwal, *China-India Relations*, 20.

⁶¹ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 11.

⁶² Athwal, *China-India Relations*, 20.

⁶³ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 5.

⁶⁴ Athwal, *China-India Relations*, 20.

situation—align with either the United States or the Soviet Union. For China, aligning with the Soviet Union was a remarkably easy choice given its commitment to communism. However, India’s decision was not as clear. Indian leadership weighed the costs of aligning to either side, focusing on what would best support its national narrative amid the aftermath of the partition of British India, and on who would provide the most robust security partnership as tensions with Pakistan continued to rise. Sumit Ganguly argues that “from the Indian perspective, the major powers, particularly the United Kingdom and the United States, adopted a decidedly pro-Pakistani stance in the Security Council proceedings,” forcing India to lean on its own state capacity and on China as it sought to establish its national narrative, hegemonic objectives, and secure its newly defined borders.⁶⁵ Additionally, Ashok Kaur argues that “the [U.S.] decision to form a military pact in 1954 with Pakistan was the end of an evenhanded policy,” completely shifting in favor of Pakistan.⁶⁶ Although, at this time, all signs pointed to India aligning itself to anti-western ideals, India instead sought to establish a third pathway for prosperity that other Asian countries could follow.⁶⁷ Jeff Smith emphasizes that “[New] Delhi was determined to remain above the political and ideological conflicts of the Cold War,” and thus remain as neutral as possible.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Bruce Riedel argues that “Nehru concluded ... that India stay neutral in the cold war and seek to build friendly ties with China.”⁶⁹ Therefore, India chose to work closely with China in order to establish a stronger security partner and carry out its national and international ambitions. Ultimately, Sino-Indian cooperation would provide the region with greater stability and give China and India greater leverage

⁶⁵ Sumit Ganguly, *Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions since 1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 25.

⁶⁶ Ashok Kapur, “Major Powers and the Persistence of the India-Pakistan Conflict,” in *The India-Pakistan Conflict: An Enduring Rivalry*, ed. T. V. Paul (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 136.

⁶⁷ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 114.

⁶⁸ Jeff M. Smith, *Cold Peace: China-India Rivalry in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 20.

⁶⁹ Bruce O. Riedel, *JFK’s Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and Sino-Indian War*, 1st Edition (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015), 10.

geopolitically. According to John Garver, Jawaharlal Nehru's foreign policy agenda was multilayered:

During the 1950s a key dimension of India's effort at Asian leadership was toward the PRC itself. As the perceptive Pakistani diplomat Mohammed Yanus pointed out, Nehru's desire to establish Indian leadership during these years enhanced the value of friendship with China. For Nehru, bringing the PRC into the international system in spite of American objections was a key component of his effort at Asian leadership.⁷⁰

Therefore, China and India maintained high-level exchanges to assist in establishing a cooperative relationship that would increase bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the region.

Ultimately, cooperation was reinforced due to regional security concerns: namely, the threat India perceived from Pakistan following independence and partition along its Western border. Fostering a bilateral relationship with China enabled India to remain focused on the threat of Pakistan, who was gaining military parity due to international and Western support. As a consequence of Sino-Indian cooperation, territorial threats emanating from the Eastern border were largely mitigated. Liu asserts that "Pakistan's military alliance with the United States and its membership of the CENTO [Central Treaty Organization] and the SEATO [Southeast Asian Treaty Organization] sponsored by the West, concerned Indian policymakers, and constituted a grave threat to India's national security."⁷¹ Furthermore, Kapur stresses that one of the themes of the United States' India-Pakistan policy was that "Indian domestic policies revealed imperialist traits which if unchecked could make India a successor to Japan's Asiatic imperialism."⁷² Additionally, Garver notes that India's policies in the region created fear and required India to take measures to assuage regional concerns.⁷³ Therefore, in order to overcome the U.S.-U.K.-Pakistan nexus, Liu argues that "Indian policymakers saw friendship with China as the best

⁷⁰ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 117.

⁷¹ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 5.

⁷² Kapur, "Major Powers and the Persistence of the India-Pakistan Conflict," 148.

⁷³ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 18.

guarantee for security.”⁷⁴ Mohan Malik echoes a similar notion, describing that “since the days of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, independent India has entertained hopes of a joint Sino-Indian leadership of Asia as a counter to Western influence.”⁷⁵ Thus, India strategically viewed China as a security partner and an important ally that could assist in influencing the region.⁷⁶

From the perspective of China, Beijing saw cooperation and friendship with India as a counterweight to the West and as a mechanism for the exportation of the Communist revolution. Chen Jian stresses there was a “division of labor between the Chinese and Soviet Communists for waging the world revolution ... they decided that while the Soviet Union would remain the center of international proletarian revolution, China’s primary duty would be the promotion of the Eastern revolution.”⁷⁷ In other words, Mao and Stalin came to an agreement to divide and conquer, forming a strategic and ideological partnership enabling both to execute the ultimate goal—the spread of Communism across the globe. Although India never declared alignment to either of the major Cold War powers, India saw the United States as a political and military threat due to its constant support of Pakistan. Therefore, despite declaring a position of nonalignment, India made overtures to China and the Soviet Union, aiding them in their grand strategy. Similarly, China viewed the U.S. as a political and military threat. For example, China’s experience during the Korean War and the first and second Taiwan Strait Crises demonstrated the hard stance the United States adopted toward China. According to Chen, “the most profound reason underlying the CCP’s [Chinese Communist Party] anti-American policy was Mao’s grand plans for transforming China’s state, society and international outlook.”⁷⁸ Part of this plan encompassed conditioning the local populace and then seeking partners abroad to share the same disdain for the United States and the Western world more broadly.

⁷⁴ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 5.

⁷⁵ Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power Rivals* (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2011), 29.

⁷⁶ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 18.

⁷⁷ Jian Chen, *Mao’s China and the Cold War*, The New Cold War History (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 3.

⁷⁸ Chen, 48.

Therefore, in order for China to achieve its international objectives, partnering with India became a valuable political and security arrangement. Thus, a strategic partnership was most advantageous to carry out both Chinese and Indian national and international interests.

Overall, these three factors—a legacy of common struggle against Western imperialism; common pressures due to the advent of the new bipolar world; and common regional and global security concerns—culminated in the Panchsheel Agreement, arguably one of the highest points of the Sino-Indian relationship. Signed in June 1954 in New Delhi, by Premier Zhou Enlai and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, the Panchsheel Agreement established, most notably, the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, trade and intercourse between the Tibet Region of China and India, and firmly recognized Tibet as a sovereign region of China.⁷⁹ Sidhu and Yuan assert that “in many ways, the 1954 agreement paved the way for improved relations between the two countries.”⁸⁰ The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence consisted of the following:

1. Mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty;
2. Mutual non-aggression;
3. Mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs;
4. Equality and mutual benefit; and
5. Peaceful coexistence.⁸¹

Although the ideals that undergird the Five Principles are not entirely new, China and India envisioned that combining these principles into an agreeable framework would underpin the foundation of a robust diplomatic approach to international relations.⁸² Ultimately,

⁷⁹ Athwal, *China-India Relations*, 20; Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 13.

⁸⁰ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 13.

⁸¹ Goh, “China and India,” 266.

⁸² Nianlong Han, ed., *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 1st ed (Hong Kong: New Horizon Press, 1990), 102–3.

China and India were committed to the maintenance of a political order that prevented another historical period of imperialist control.

Analyzing the terms of the agreement shows that India did not necessarily see the agreement as a win-win. Specifically, the Tibetan aspect of the Panchsheel Agreement did not settle well for India; however, India lacked the capabilities necessary to prevent China's occupation. Sidhu and Yuan assert that "realizing that the Chinese occupation of Tibet was a *fait accompli* and not having the wherewithal to challenge these developments, Nehru eventually acknowledged Tibet as an autonomous region of China under the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954."⁸³ Nonetheless, Nehru cooperated and hoped that, over time, both sides could revisit the issue of Tibet and complete a more favorable deal. For China, the deal was a win-win; they had tied India's hands on Tibet and, based on the establishment of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, appeared more favorable to the rest of the non-aligned states.⁸⁴ In the long run, tension surrounding Tibet eventually resurfaced as a critical flashpoint in Sino-Indian relations. Nevertheless, at this junction in time, Sino-Indian cooperation neared its peak as the Panchsheel Agreement blossomed into the Bandung Conference.

China and India introduced the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence to the countries present at the historic Bandung Conference, which further cemented their relationship and vision for the future. The Bandung Conference was held in Indonesia in April of 1955 and was the first ever Afro-Asian conference. Han Nianlong contends that the Bandung Conference "represented the common struggle of the Asian and African peoples to safeguard their national independence, preserve world peace, and promote friendly cooperation and thus served as a great impetus to unity and progress."⁸⁵ For China and India, this was an opportunity to jointly lead the newly independent countries under their tutelage—through the vehicle of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. Garver contends that Nehru was driven to include China due to the opportunity to build closer ties

⁸³ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 13.

⁸⁴ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 51–52.

⁸⁵ Han, *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 107.

with it, show the rest of the newly independent states that China was a credible ally, and to put constraints on China via the acknowledgment of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.⁸⁶ Han argues that “in attending the Conference, China’s policy was to expand the united front of peace, to promote the national independence movement, to create conditions for the establishment and enhancement of relations between China and some other Asian and African countries, and to make the conference a success.”⁸⁷ In short, India and China shared a common struggle for independence, similar regional and global security concerns, and a common vision for the future, which was embraced by the members of the conference and exhibited the pinnacle of Chinese and Indian cooperation. However, regardless of the high levels of cooperation, there lay dormant issues surrounding unresolved territorial claims and competition for regional influence.

B. SINO-INDIAN COMPETITION AND HOSTILITY 1956–1959

From 1956 to 1959, Sino-Indian relations transitioned from cooperative to competitive and hostile, primarily due to competition for regional influence and unresolved territorial claims, which ultimately culminated in the Tibetan rebellion. As early as the Bandung conference itself, there was evidence of a growing hostility between China and India. Garver argues that the Bandung Conference exposed a deep-seated “rivalry between Nehru and Zhou” due to differing interpretations of the proposed future of Africa and Asia.⁸⁸ Nehru argued that the newly established states should align neither with the Soviet Union nor with the United States and, instead, stressed that choosing one or the other would result in World War III.⁸⁹ As an alternative, Nehru recommended a policy of nonalignment, arguing that this type of policy would be the most advantageous in achieving long-term peace.⁹⁰ However, Nehru’s approach was not well received, and instead, Zhou

⁸⁶ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 118–19.

⁸⁷ Han, *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 107.

⁸⁸ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 119.

⁸⁹ Garver, 119.

⁹⁰ Garver, 119–20.

won over those in attendance with his diplomacy and humble attitude.⁹¹ Zhou stressed that the Chinese delegation came to the conference desiring to build Afro-Asian comradery, seeking commonality and accepting differences among the states as inherent and not something over which to quarrel. Overall, his message emphasized that China would work diligently with the Afro-Asian states to preserve the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.⁹² David Malone and Rohan Mukherjee explain that “after Bandung, the emerging competition between India and China contributed to an increasingly strained bilateral relationship.”⁹³ Although the Bandung Conference was an overall success for Sino-Indian relations, it also begat competing interests for regional and global influence among the newly independent states—nonalignment vs. communism. Nehru espoused nonalignment as the governing standard for the developing world, while Mao championed a class struggle designed to polarize the situation. Garver stressed that “Mao’s militant line [would] soon [bring] China into conflict with India.”⁹⁴ Following the Bandung Conference, the once-promising relationship started to show signs of competition as both had vastly different outlooks for the future.

Sino-Indian relations were further challenged by the early signs of the Sino-Soviet split in 1956. The rift between the two communist camps, China and the USSR, had significant international effects on China’s relationship with India. China believed that in order to compete with the USSR, it needed to shift its political and security relationship from India to Pakistan. Ashok Kapur explains that “in the 1950s, Pakistan was attractive to China in the context of its global competition with the USSR.”⁹⁵ Additionally, M.S. Rajan and Shivaji Ganguly contend that “in the case of China ... its geo-political stakes in preventing India from becoming a major power were so high that it began to perceive a

⁹¹ Garver, 119–20; Han, *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 109–10.

⁹² Han, *Diplomacy of Contemporary China*, 108–9.

⁹³ David M. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee, “India and China: Conflict and Cooperation,” *Survival* 52, no. 1 (March 2010): 139–40, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396331003612513>.

⁹⁴ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 122.

⁹⁵ Kapur, “Major Powers and the Persistence of the India-Pakistan Conflict,” 148.

great deal of interest in the ability of Pakistan to act as a check on India.”⁹⁶ Increased China-Pakistan relations pushed India to seek security and economic assistance from the USSR. According to Kapur, “the USSR supported India diplomatically at the UN Security Council on Kashmir in the 1950s, using its veto often on India’s behalf, and later it helped India militarily by giving it valuable and timely military aid and equipment.”⁹⁷ Therefore, as the geo-political landscape shifted in the mid-1950s, it created a competitive and hostile relationship between China and India.

The decisive factor tearing at the heart of the Sino-Indian relationship centered on unresolved territorial claims dating back to the 1914 Simla Convention that established the McMahon Line. Figure 1 highlights the conflict surrounding China and India’s shared border. The critical areas to note are north of India and east of Kashmir in an area called Aksai-Chin and northeast of India along the blue route demarcating the McMahon Line, which encompasses parts of Tibet, Tawang, and Arunachal Pradesh. These highlighted zones do not capture every area of disagreement; however, the disputes over these areas just discussed, specifically the area closest to Tibet, significantly impacted and altered Sino-Indian relations from 1956–1959.

⁹⁶ Sisir Gupta, Mannaraswamighala Sreeranga Rajan, and Shivaji Ganguly, *India and the International System* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1981), 188–89.

⁹⁷ Kapur, “Major Powers and the Persistence of the India-Pakistan Conflict,” 133.



Figure 1. Sino-Indian disputed border regions⁹⁸

The McMahon Line was established in 1914 during the Simla Convention, in which British and Tibetan representatives signed an agreement that divided Tibet between China and India. From the Chinese perspective, the McMahon Line was categorically considered an illegal device of imperial states to undermine Chinese sovereignty.⁹⁹ As Arif has stressed, “China argued that local Tibetan authorities had no legal rights to conclude any border treaty with the British.”¹⁰⁰ From the Indian perspective, the McMahon Line created cartographically sovereign Indian territory, which China actively ignored and violated, resulting in a fundamental divide concerning territory along their shared border.¹⁰¹ In 1958, China published announcements internationally that it had constructed roads connecting Sinkiang with western Tibet that were fully traversable by automobile.¹⁰² Sino-

⁹⁸ abn397, “More on India-China Border Disputes,” Abn397 (blog), August 4, 2017, <https://abn397.wordpress.com/2017/08/04/more-on-india-china-border-disputes/>.

⁹⁹ Arif, “History of Sino-Indian Relations,” 131.

¹⁰⁰ Arif, 131–32.

¹⁰¹ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 19.

¹⁰² Maxwell, “Sino-Indian Border Dispute Reconsidered,” 910.

Indian analysis of the border led each state to conclude that the other state was infringing on its sovereignty, specifically concerning the McMahon Line, creating a perceived security threat. Thus, the unresolved territorial claims encapsulate the most critical aspects of friction between China and India.

Indian and Chinese policy concerning Tibet and the territory it occupied created ambiguity and escalated tension between the two. Rajiv Sikri stresses that “it was evident that the steps being taken by China to tighten its grip on Tibet led it to occupy and claim territory that India also claimed.”¹⁰³ Beijing considered Tibet a part of China proper; therefore, any meddling by India posed a dangerous threat to China’s national security. Contrarily, New Delhi considered Tibet to be a part of its strategic nationalist narrative and state security apparatus.¹⁰⁴ Moreover, New Delhi viewed China’s military, economic, and political build-up in Tibet as a danger to India’s national security.¹⁰⁵ However, Prime Minister Nehru, knowing India was not materially capable of challenging China, desired to play mediator to the dispute, which served to undermine Sino-Indian relations.¹⁰⁶ Mao did not see Nehru’s actions as neutral, but rather caused China to question India’s objectives regarding its territorial integrity. Nehru’s actions were considered duplicitous in nature, increasing tension between the two states.

Prime Minister Nehru and Premier Zhou opened dialogue concerning the issues of their shared border and Tibet in hopes of striking a win-win deal. After Nehru and the Indian government recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of China and signed the Panchsheel agreement in 1954, India expected that their goodwill would soon lead to a definitive border agreement.¹⁰⁷ However, as the years went on and talks continued to stall, Nehru grew unhappy that the Chinese government had not revisited these issues. China countered and Zhou denounced the McMahon Line, stating that “the Sino-Indian boundary

¹⁰³ Rajiv Sirki, “The Tibet Factor in India-China Relations,” *Journal of International Affairs* 64, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 2011): 61.

¹⁰⁴ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Garver, 32.

¹⁰⁶ Smith, *Cold Peace*, 91.

¹⁰⁷ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 13.

has never been formally delimited.”¹⁰⁸ As tension continued to rise and grow worse, neither side was willing to compromise on the parameters of their shared border. The resulting stalemate compelled Nehru to adopt a strict policy of Non-Recognition and Non-Negotiation.¹⁰⁹ In other words, India no longer recognized Tibet as an autonomous region of China and would no longer negotiate until China accepted the parameters outlined by the McMahon Line, ultimately increasing tensions between Beijing and New Delhi—further damaging the fragile relationship. The proceeding diplomatic failures resulted in the 1959 Tibetan separatist revolt against Chinese control.

The 1959 Tibetan rebellion is the critical flashpoint capturing the serious nature of the territorial issue between China and India. Liu asserts that “the Tibetan rebellion was the catalyst of the existing tensions in the relations between China and India.”¹¹⁰ The rebellion erupted on 10 March and lasted approximately one month until the CCP cracked down and suppressed it, leading to nearly 90,000 Tibetan deaths and over 80,000 refugees who fled to India, including the Dalai Lama.¹¹¹ Although many argue that the incident was a local dispute over who would govern Tibet—Tibet traditionalists or CCP appointed officials—the rebellion was a critical factor between India and China regarding unresolved territory and their competing desire to exercise sovereignty and influence over Tibet. Malik emphasizes that “Tibet lies at the heart of China-India relations. It is the key to understanding Beijing’s stance on the China-India territorial dispute.”¹¹² Furthermore, he stresses that “the eruption of the 1959 rebellion in Tibet soured relations and culminated in the 1962 War.”¹¹³ Overall, this conflict is marked by strategic distrust and marred by differing historical interpretations over maps and lines of demarcation, which foreshadow the 1962 Sino-Indian border war.

¹⁰⁸ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 20.

¹⁰⁹ Liu, 22.

¹¹⁰ Liu, 25.

¹¹¹ Malik, *China and India*, 129.

¹¹² Malik, 125.

¹¹³ Malik, 131.

C. INTENSE RIVALRY AND A STRUGGLE FOR TERRITORY 1960–1962

From 1960–1962, Sino-Indian relations wholly unraveled. The two Asian giants—motivated by territorial sovereignty and domestic and international pressures—implemented assertive policies that brought them to war along their shared border in 1962, marking the end of *Hindi, Chini, Bhai Bhai* and creating their own cold war.

The issues of territorial sovereignty surrounding the Tibetan rebellion created more profound Sino-Indian discord. Following the Tibetan Rebellion and China’s successful suppression of it, Zhou and Nehru gathered compromise over their shared border; however, neither could agree on a win-win compromise. Sidhu and Yuan state that “in a last ditch effort to get the border talks back on track, Nehru and Zhou met in New Delhi from 19–25 April 1960. However, the deadlock continued as neither side was willing to budge from its position.”¹¹⁴ Furthermore, Andrew Kennedy argues that “in the course of the talks, Zhou essentially offered to trade China’s claims in the east for Indian concession in the west. Nehru, however, was unwilling to make such a deal.”¹¹⁵ In short, the issues of territorial sovereignty grew to encapsulate Sino-Indian relations, dividing China and India and defining their relationship for decades to come.

Additionally, domestic factors in China and India contributed to growing dissonance. Scholars argue that Nehru and Mao felt immense domestic pressures that led to assertive foreign policy agendas. Kennedy argues that “[Nehru] was under great pressure domestically to respond forcefully to what was seen as a Chinese intrusion on Indian territory.”¹¹⁶ Garver goes further and explains that “criticism of Nehru’s policy of befriending and placating China began to mount,” forcing him to take a more adversarial approach to Chinese assertive actions in Tibet and near the McMahon Line.¹¹⁷ Chen argues that “because of the domestic mobilization function Mao attached to China’s external policies ... Beijing’s leaders resorted to force only when the confrontation was in one way

¹¹⁴ Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 14.

¹¹⁵ Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 228.

¹¹⁶ Kennedy, 232.

¹¹⁷ Garver, “China’s Decision for War with India in 1962,” 99.

or another related to China's territorial integrity and physical security."¹¹⁸ Garver adds that China was faced with multiple domestic threats emanating notably from Chiang Kai-Shek in Taiwan and the failing domestic policy known as the Great Leap Forward.¹¹⁹ The domestic threats fomented Mao's calculus for mobilization focused on countering perceived threats to territory and national integrity. Overall, the domestic pressure on China's and India's governments encouraged aggressive actions and instigated further conflict.

In conjunction with the changing domestic landscape, international factors amplified the growing division in Sino-Indian relations. According to Garver, China was dealing with the notion that the United States and India were working together to support Tibet's bid for autonomy.¹²⁰ Furthermore, due to the Sino-Soviet split, China felt increasingly isolated given the Soviet Union's unwillingness to support China's more aggressive policy, instead preferring that China submit to India's demands.¹²¹ According to Sidhu and Yuan, Mao did not receive the support he was expecting from the Soviet Union, highlighting that "the Soviet Union denounced China's approach as an expression of a narrow nationalist attitude and tilted in favor of India, arguing that it was unthinkable for a military and economically weaker India to launch such a military attack against China."¹²² India also made efforts to internationalize the struggle for the Tibetans, fueling an aggressive response by Mao and the PRC.¹²³ Mao perceived that China's borders were threatened along all sides, requiring a strong stance to defend China's territory from the likes of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, India, and the Soviet Union. Thus, the pressure mounted against China and India; war was nearing.

¹¹⁸ Chen, *Mao's China and the Cold War*, 14.

¹¹⁹ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 101.

¹²⁰ Garver, 57.

¹²¹ Garver, 57.

¹²² Sidhu and Yuan, *China and India*, 16.

¹²³ Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," 92–93.

International factors, such as the Sino-Pakistani relationship influenced India's assertive policies as it planned for a potential two-front war. Therefore, as time passed, India enacted policies to secure its borders against what became its most dangerous threat, China. Thus, Nehru implemented the Forward Policy, arguably the single most important policy that led to the Sino-Indian Border War. The Forward Policy was a strategy that attempted to gradually reassert India's sovereignty over disputed border areas; the objective was "to prevent the Chinese advance and ... establish the physical presence of Indian troops."¹²⁴ According to Kennedy, Nehru's Forward Policy was designed to "increase the pressure on China ... Under this approach, India would establish outposts up to, and sometimes beyond, Chinese positions in the disputed areas."¹²⁵ Garver asserts that "Nehru concluded that the time was right for action ... the deterioration of the Sino-Soviet alliance and China's domestic crisis convinced Nehru that the situation was advantageous to India."¹²⁶ However, the Forward Policy backfired as China responded with its assertive policy designed to reprimand India for violating Chinese sovereignty.

After numerous rounds of failed diplomatic talks, China adopted an adversarial policy of armed coexistence along the border. China responded to India's Forward Policy by launching a military campaign in October of 1962 that decimated India's forces.¹²⁷ India was surprised by the response from China, having assumed that China did not have the means or will to conduct a counterattack. China's counterattack left Nehru and his government defeated and humiliated.¹²⁸ Garver stresses that "The PLA's drive to the southern foothills of the Himalayas had a profound effect on Indian opinion. China became a nemesis of India ranked only after Pakistan. Even forty-some years after the war this sentiment remains significant in India."¹²⁹ Thus, the Sino-Indian border war marked the official unraveling of Sino-Indian relations and the end of *Chini Hindi Bhai Bhai*.

¹²⁴ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 31.

¹²⁵ Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 229.

¹²⁶ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 59.

¹²⁷ Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," 103–5, 122.

¹²⁸ Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 232–33.

¹²⁹ Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," 124.

D. CONCLUSION

From 1950–1962, Sino-Indian relations are best categorized as a mixture of cooperation and competition. From 1950–1955, after establishing their official governments, China and India took several steps toward cooperation hinging on three factors: similar historical legacies imposed on both states by Western imperialism; similar regional and global security concerns; and similar pressures created by the bipolar international system. All three factors led China and India to work together as evidenced by the Panchsheel Agreement and the Bandung Conference. However, from 1956–1959, following the Bandung Conference, the relationship started to spiral out of control due to competing national and regional interests and issues surrounding unresolved territorial claims, which led to the 1959 Tibetan rebellion—a catalyst encapsulating Sino-Indian tensions. From 1960–1962, these factors compounded and grew worse as China and India faced mounting pressure domestically and internationally—increasing the concern over territorial sovereignty. The Sino-Indian relationship completely soured when war broke out in October of 1962. The Chinese demonstrated their superiority, leaving the Indians humiliated and threatened not only by Pakistan to its East but now also by an assertive China to its West. The result of the war severed all early efforts for joint leadership in Asia and ushered in dueling narratives for Asian hegemony. In short, this chapter has demonstrated that early Sino-Indian relationships proved to be promising as both desired to work together to usher in a new international system antithetical to the bipolar system. However, these notions collapsed as China and India could not overcome their competing interests in the region and the deep-seated issue concerning territorial integrity.

III. A QUEST FOR POWER AND INFLUENCE IN THE INDO-PACIFIC REGION SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS 2008–2017

After three decades of dysfunctional Sino-Indian relations, the two states began the process of rebuilding friendship early in the 21st century. This process involved creating confidence-building measures designed to increase diplomatic, institutional, cultural, military, and economic transparency in an attempt to overcome historical legacies and build a new era of Sino-Indian cooperation. Within the scope of international relations, radical structural changes have occurred that have created reverberations throughout the world, complicating state-to-state relations. These changes include the global war on terrorism, the global financial crisis, and a shift towards great power competition, and they have deepened, broadened, and complicated Sino-Indian relations. In the second decade of the 21st century, the relationship was once again strained by the complexities imposed by each state's interpretation of territorial sovereignty and desire for resources and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. In short, structural changes have not only created new avenues for cooperation but also renewed competition and conflict as China and India jockey for power and influence in the region.

This chapter begins in the early 2000s following China's and India's remarkable economic development and growth, analyzing their multifaceted relationship from strategic cooperation to strategic competition. It analyzes the evolution of Sino-Indian relations from 2008–2017, dividing this period into three blocks, demonstrating the progression from cooperation to competition and conflict. The first section analyzes the relationship from 2008–2011, highlighting the growth in confidence-building measures, trade, and security relations. The second section analyzes the relationship from 2012–2015, emphasizing China's and India's robust military modernization and transition from pragmatic to assertive leadership, culminating in renewed tensions over territorial integrity and sovereignty. The last section analyzes the relationship from 2016–2017, focusing on the Doklam Standoff, the most protracted border dispute since the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, which punctuates a new era of strained relations. Overall, this chapter finds that, despite unprecedented economic growth and global integration, Sino-Indian bilateral

relations remain marred by territorial sovereignty issues and “competition for resources and influence in the [Indo-Pacific] region.”¹³⁰

A. A SHARED VISION: 2008–2011

There are three factors that characterized Sino-Indian cooperation in the early 2000s. One, the threat of terrorism within their borders and throughout the region prompted both states to create a common framework to combat this common security threat. Two, both states desired to maintain and expand their development and growth. Lastly, President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh took a pragmatic approach to bilateral and global relations, openly building mechanisms and creating consensus for better Sino-Indian relations.

1. Security and Military Cooperation

From 2008–2011, Sino-Indian security and military relations can primarily be characterized as cooperative. However, the most noteworthy flare-up in Sino-Indian security and military relations occurred as a result of growing U.S.-Indian relations in the nuclear realm. The U.S.-Indian Civilian Nuclear Agreement prompted China to question India’s strategic security and military aspirations, but, despite this instance of conflict, overall Sino-Indian security and military relations took on new levels of cooperation. The underlying factor leading to closer Sino-Indian security and military relations was the rise of terrorism and the necessity for both states to build a multinational Asian security apparatus designed to preserve peace and stability in the Asia Pacific.

a. Fighting the Threat of Terrorism Together

Following the terrorist attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, the international community was stunned, fundamentally altering how states defend against the threat of terrorism. Shen Dingli argues that “the 9/11 attacks have transformed the world political landscape ... the anti-terror issues [have] been increasingly part of the new

¹³⁰ Colonel Stuart Kenny, “China and India: A ‘New Great Game’ founded on historic mistrust and current competition,” in *Indo-Pacific Strategic Digest* (Canberra: The Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, 2015), 26, http://www.defence.gov.au/adc/publications/Indo-Pacific_Strategic_Digest.asp.

Sino-Indian security relationship.”¹³¹ Following the 9/11 attacks, China and India supported the political and military aim of fighting the Taliban in Afghanistan, mainly converging with the rest of the world on the necessity to destroy these terror cells. However, neither state supported the U.S. response to these attacks, questioning the justification—that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction—to preemptively attack Iraq. Therefore, at a global level, China and India converged on the political and military aims of combatting terrorism.

Concerning terrorism in the immediate surroundings of China and India, both states opened dialogue about combatting the growing threat terrorism posed to their national security and the Indo-Pacific region more broadly.¹³² Joshi explains that China and India expanded CBMs in 2006, signing “an MoU [Memorandum of Understanding]—the first ever between the two defense ministries—calling for high level military exchanges, joint exercises, counterterrorism and anti-piracy cooperation.”¹³³ Beginning in 2007, China and India launched their first joint anti-terror training evolution in southwest China, called Hand-in-Hand 2007.¹³⁴ Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang stated that “the training aimed to strengthen the two countries’ exchanges in the field of anti-terrorism ... and promote the development of the bilateral strategic partnership.”¹³⁵ Since 2007, China and India have made this exercise an annual military and security training evolution, creating a new era of closer Sino-Indian security and military relations.

b. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Commonality under an Asian Security Apparatus

Additionally, China and India are engaged in a newly established Asian security organization predicated on counterterrorism. This organization is known as the Shanghai

¹³¹ Shen Dingli, “Building China-India Reconciliation,” *Asian Perspective* 34, no. 4 (2010): 157.

¹³² Dingli, 157.

¹³³ Joshi, “The Wuhan Summit and the India–China Border Dispute,” 5.

¹³⁴ “China, India Wrap up Anti-Terror Military Training,” China.org, accessed April 6, 2019, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/China/236830.htm>.

¹³⁵ China.org.

Cooperation Organization and evolved from the Shanghai Five in 2001.¹³⁶ The SCO is led by China and encompasses five member states—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Russia—and four observer states—Iran, Mongolia, India, and Pakistan.¹³⁷ The role of the SCO is multi-faceted, encompassing not only security but also political and economic motivations; however, it is primarily a security organization. Jyotsna Bakshi explains that the primary role of the SCO is a “joint struggle against separatism, extremism, and terrorism.”¹³⁸ Overall, the SCO demonstrates another mechanism showing increased Sino-Indian cooperation concerning regional security.

2. Economic Cooperation

A second step toward greater Sino-Indian cooperation occurred as a result of unprecedented economic development and growth. Many scholars argue that economic interdependence leads to cooperation. According to Bruce Russett and John O’Neal, avoiding conflict and maintaining peace are equally important pursuits for any countries, regardless of governing style, that depend on bilateral relations or the global economy.¹³⁹ It is important to note that while bilateral trade between these two countries has reached new heights, Beijing’s economic projects along the periphery of India have the potential to challenge overall Sino-Indian economic relations. However, despite competing interests, both states have made it clear that they desire to maintain and expand their economic development and growth. Therefore, economic interdependence has brought China and India closer than arguably any point since both states gained independence in the 1950s.

a. Extraordinary Bilateral Trade Relations

China and India have engaged in an extraordinary level of economic coordination consisting of a significant amount of bilateral trade and investment. According to Gillian

¹³⁶ Julie Boland, *Ten Years of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization: A Lost Decade? A Partner for the United States?* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2011), 8, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/ten-years-of-the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-a-lost-decade-a-partner-for-the-united-states/>.

¹³⁷ Jyotsna Bakshi, “Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) before and after September 11,” *Strategic Analysis* 26, no. 2 (April 1, 2002): 265, 268, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160208450043>.

¹³⁸ Bakshi, 265.

¹³⁹ Russett and O’Neal, *Triangulating Peace*, 155.

Goh and Hui Lynn, “the first fruits of the recent Sino-Indian rapprochement are most evident, and naturally so, in the gargantuan growth in bilateral trade.”¹⁴⁰ According to Jing-dong Yuan, a critical element of the remarkable increase in economic trade began in 2006 when President Hu Jintao visited India, “the first such visit by a Chinese head of state in a decade, marking an important milestone in the bilateral relationship.”¹⁴¹ The key takeaway from Hu’s visit to India was that both governments signed a number of agreements designed to strengthen cooperation across the trade, investment, energy, and educational sectors.¹⁴² From that point on, bilateral trade rapidly increased, punctuated by China becoming India’s largest trade partner in 2008, surpassing U.S.-India trade in value.¹⁴³ Overall, Sino-Indian bilateral trade has increased from 13.6 billion USD in 2004 to approximately 62 billion USD in 2010, reflecting the success of the initiatives championed by both state leaders.¹⁴⁴

Economic relations culminated in 2011 when both states established a formal strategic economic dialogue. Teshu Singh emphasizes that, following Premier Wen Jiabao’s visit to India, it was decided that to address trade issues and further strengthen bilateral economic relations, “a regular bilateral strategic economic dialogue mechanism will be established between the two countries.”¹⁴⁵ The strategic economic dialogue was designed to increase coordination on large-scale economic policies and facilitate a mechanism that China and India could utilize to increase overall economic development.¹⁴⁶ The establishment of this strategic dialogue emphasizes the importance

¹⁴⁰ Goh, “China and India,” 272.

¹⁴¹ Jing-Dong Yuan, “The Dragon and the Elephant: Chinese-Indian Relations in the 21st Century,” *The Washington Quarterly* 30, no. 3 (July 2007): 131, <https://doi.org/10.1162/wash.2007.30.3.131>.

¹⁴² Yuan, 131.

¹⁴³ Scott, “Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century,” 260.

¹⁴⁴ Bhavna Singh, “Sino-Indian Strategic Economic Dialogue: Treading a Cautious Corridor,” *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies* (2012), 1, JSTOR; Goh, “China and India,” 2006, 272.

¹⁴⁵ Teshu Singh, “Sino-Indian Strategic Economic Dialogue” (Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2012), 1, JSTOR, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09188>.

¹⁴⁶ Singh, 3.

of uninterrupted bilateral trade for both economies and demonstrates that China and India are willing to work through issues of discord for long-term economic benefits.

b. Multilateral Economic Institutions Are Redefining Sino-Indian Cooperation

From 2008–2011, both states found themselves leading several multilateral economic forums such as BRICS and the World Trade Organization. BRICS is comprises the original four emerging economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China—and, later, South Africa.¹⁴⁷ Chietigj Bajpae emphasizes that the “BRICS forum [has] emerged as a key platform for India and China to deepen regional economic integration.”¹⁴⁸ The creation of BRICS highlights a critical evolution in Sino-Indian relations and serves as potential leverage that they can utilize to address other issues outside of economics. China and India are also leveraging the WTO to facilitate a more inclusive global economic structure. Charalampos Efstathopoulos emphasizes the role India was assuming regarding shaping and influencing economic coordination:

The onset of the global financial crisis at the end of 2008 provided a new opportunity to India to act as a system shaper, especially after it became a member of the G-20 leaders’ summit. India began to take diplomatic initiatives to help overcome the DDA [Doha Development Agenda] deadlock, hosting the first post-crisis WTO meeting in New Delhi in 2009, and submitting several comprehensive proposals that aimed at strengthening the WTO.¹⁴⁹

Overall, Sino-Indian economic integration through massive bilateral trade and increasing leadership roles in multilateral economic forums demonstrates quantitatively how these two Asian giants were cooperating to reorient the region.

¹⁴⁷ Armijo, “The BRICS Countries (Brazil, Russia, India, And China) As Analytical Category: Mirage or Insight?,” 7; Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance,” 245.

¹⁴⁸ Bajpae, “China-India,” 111.

¹⁴⁹ Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance,” 242.

3. Political and Diplomatic Cooperation

The third element of greater Sino-Indian cooperation occurred in the political and diplomatic spheres, underscored by pragmatic leadership and converging interests in international institutions. It is important to note that this period was not immune to problematic politics and diplomacy. For example, both states frustrated one another in regard to territorial sovereignty: China began issuing visas to Indians in the contested territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, and India arguably fueled the Tibetan uprising during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Nonetheless, Sino-Indian relations generally increased, converging along major political and diplomatic agreements on regional and international topics.

a. Pragmatic Leadership

The dynamics of both states' leaders, Manmohan Singh and Hu Jintao, played a significant role in creating and propelling new and existing policies that punctuated a new era of Sino-Indian cooperation, giving rise to notions of an Asian century. Singh and Hu desired to build upon established norms, while also piloting innovative mechanisms to reconcile differences and build cooperation to reorient the region. In 2005, New Delhi and Beijing declared a strategic partnership centered on mechanisms to instill peace and prosperity.¹⁵⁰ Zhang Li states that "the nature of the partnership ... is to avoid confrontation, cultivate friendship, and intensify economic interaction."¹⁵¹ In 2006, following President Hu's historic meeting with Prime Minister Singh, Hu proposed a ten-point strategy designed to deepen bilateral relations.¹⁵² The details of the proposed strategy focused on expanding economic ties, building institutional linkages, instilling mutual trust, settling outstanding issues, and increasing all-around mutually beneficial cooperation.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ Zhang Li, "China-India Relations: Strategic Engagement and Challenges," *Asie Visions* no. 34 (September 2010): 11, <https://www.ifri.org/en/publications/enotes/asie-visions/china-india-relations-strategic-engagement-and-challenges>.

¹⁵¹ Li, 11.

¹⁵² "A Ten-Pronged Strategy," *Outlook*, November 21, 2006, <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/a-ten-pronged-strategy/233182>.

¹⁵³ *Outlook*.

The two governments then met in Beijing in 2008 and reiterated their “resolve to promote the building of a harmonious world of durable peace and common prosperity through developing the Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for peace and prosperity between the two countries.”¹⁵⁴ In 2010, both sides officially agreed to the ten-point strategy, marking a new era of political and diplomatic cooperation.

b. Institutional Consensus Driving Greater Cooperation

At a broader level, the leaders of China and India have converged on many global issues revealing a robust approach toward increased cooperation and trust. Both governments’ approaches to global topics demonstrate that China and India desire to revise the western-leaning global governance structure through institutional consensus. Shen argues that “the China-India rapprochement amounts to sharing a common view of a fair world order accommodating multipolarity in the international system.”¹⁵⁵ China and India began coordinating on worldwide issues, such as global governance, international trade, collective security arrangements, and climate change, hoping to further their aims of creating a more equitable global system.¹⁵⁶ China’s and India’s actions convey an understanding that reshaping the Bretton-Woods global governance system is complex and requires sustained cooperation and multilateralism.¹⁵⁷

Both states have integrated into global institutions, such as the WTO, International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, and the UNSC, to push an agenda that better suits the majority of the world. Sino-Indian efforts to shape a more inclusive WTO began as early as 2001 during the Doha round of negotiations, and in 2003 when both states formed the G-20.¹⁵⁸ China and India led the charge by advocating on behalf of the developing world on issues concerning the current agriculture trading rules and regulations, which favor the

¹⁵⁴ “A Shared Vision for the 21st Century of the Republic of India and the People’s Republic of China,” Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, accessed March 2, 2019, <https://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?5145/A1Shared1Vision1for1the121st1Century1of1the1Republic1of>.

¹⁵⁵ Dingli, “Building China-India Reconciliation,” 151.

¹⁵⁶ Arif, “History of Sino-Indian Relations,” 136.

¹⁵⁷ Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance,” 249.

¹⁵⁸ Efstathopoulos, 240–42.

developed states while hurting the developing states.¹⁵⁹ In terms of international financial institutions, China and India desire a more significant stake in voting and quota shares of institutions such as IMF and World Bank.¹⁶⁰

In terms of UN focused security arrangements, China and India often frame their policy decisions based on non-interference and non-violence, typically at odds with the West. Additionally, concerning the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), both states oppose issues relating to carbon emissions caps, arguing that caps on carbon emissions hinder their collective ability to fulfill their national development strategies. United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voting records also indicate that China and India align more often than not, demonstrating that their “positions coincide with the collective interests of the developing nations.”¹⁶¹ Overall, China and India find that the Western-led global governance system mostly favors the United States and prevents their full-fledged rise to great power status, ultimately leading China and India to forge a stronger relationship.

B. COMPREHENSIVE COMPETITION FOR REGIONAL INFLUENCE: 2012–2015

Following a short period of cooperation, Sino-Indian relations quickly diverged into a competition over regional influence. The essential elements highlighting the second decade of the 21st-century Sino-Indian relationship center on their dueling military modernization programs, competing economic development strategies, and assertive new leadership.

1. Security and Military Competition: A Battle for Regional Hegemony

From 2012–2015, Sino-Indian security and military relations transitioned from cooperative and cordial to competitive and contentious due to both states’ perception of the other. Keshab Ratha and Sushanta Mahapatra argue that “China and India are locked in a

¹⁵⁹ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 8.

¹⁶⁰ Efstathopoulos, “India and Global Governance,” 243.

¹⁶¹ Aparajita Das, “A Fine Balance: India’s Voting Record at the UNGA,” *Observer Research Foundation*, no. 192 (July 2017): 2.

classic security dilemma: one country sees its actions as defensive, but the same actions appear aggressive to the other.”¹⁶² Pant concurs, stating that “the Sino-Indian strategic relationship is rapidly evolving and tensions are building up.”¹⁶³ The underlying factors leading to the strain of security and military relations are both states’ military modernization programs and increased tension along their contested border.

a. Chinese Naval Modernization: A Rising Great Power

China’s military modernization has been taking place since the early 1990s, but over the last decade, its military modernization has experienced tremendous results, fundamentally reshaping the perception that the rest of the region and the world have toward its rise. Two Indian scholars of note, Harsh Pant and Das Pushan argue that “China’s growing naval capability has resulted in an impression that Beijing not only seeks primacy in near seas but naval dominance in far flung areas.”¹⁶⁴ It is important to note that the two catalysts for China’s motivation to modernize its military and navy were the 1991 Gulf War and the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis. Robert Ross and Jo Bekkevold note that the 1991 Gulf War, where the United States demonstrated robust military capabilities with its allies to defeat Saddam Hussein, convinced China that it needed to rebuild its military.¹⁶⁵ Michael Green adds that the third Taiwan Strait Crisis in 1996 reiterated China’s need to modernize its navy specifically.¹⁶⁶ These events drove China’s policymakers to acquire a large and capable military force that could bolster China’s status in the Indo-Pacific and prepare it for 21st-century warfare.

In 2012, the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) became the largest navy in the Indo-Pacific. Michael Green states that the PLAN possesses “approximately 60

¹⁶² Keshab Chandra Ratha and Sushanta Kumar Mahapatra, “Recasting Sino-Indian Relations: Towards a Closer Development Partnership,” *Strategic Analysis* 39, no. 6 (November 2, 2015): 705, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2015.1090683>.

¹⁶³ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 18.

¹⁶⁴ Pant and Das, “China’s Military Rise and the Indian Challenge,” 10.

¹⁶⁵ Robert S. Ross and Jo Inge Bekkevold, eds., *China in the Era of Xi Jinping: Domestic and Foreign Policy Challenges* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2016), xvii.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Green et al., *Countering Coercion in Maritime Asia: The Theory and Practice of Gray Zone Deterrence* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2017), 10.

destroyers and frigates, 35 submarines, 51 amphibious ships, and 67 missile-equipped small combatants in its East and South Sea Fleets alone.”¹⁶⁷ Pant explains that “China’s economic transformation has given it the capability to emerge as a major military power as it continues to announce double-digit increases in its military spending.”¹⁶⁸ Over the last two decades, China’s military expenditures have rapidly increased. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) estimates that China’s defense spending from 2012–2015 began at \$157 billion USD and increased to \$214 billion USD by 2015.¹⁶⁹ China spends its defense dollars on three categories: (1) training and military exercises, (2) purchasing and repairing weapons, and (3) acquiring new military equipment and technology.¹⁷⁰ Overall, the PLA naval, air, ground, and rocket forces have developed into a world-class military with far-reaching capabilities that rival those of the United States, which has created widespread concern in the region.

b. *Indian Naval Modernization: A Direct Response to China*

Although Pakistan is a significant security threat to India, China is the most critical threat to India’s bid for great power status in the Indo-Pacific region.¹⁷¹ Thus, Pant contends that “the real challenge for India, however, lies in China’s rise as a military power.”¹⁷² China’s robust naval modernization has stoked fear of containment among Indians, ultimately propelling India to rebuild its military and naval program. Rajesh Rajagopalan explains that “China’s military power and its proclivity to use military force—as most recently illustrated in the South China Sea—represent a serious threat [to

¹⁶⁷ Green et al., 10–11.

¹⁶⁸ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 13.

¹⁶⁹ “What Does China Really Spend on Its Military?,” *ChinaPower Project* (blog), December 28, 2015, <https://chinapower.csis.org/military-spending/>.

¹⁷⁰ *ChinaPower Project*.

¹⁷¹ Ashley J. Tellis, “China and India in Asia,” in *The India-China Relationship: What the United States Needs to Know*, ed. Francine Frankel and Harry Harding (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 138.

¹⁷² Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 14..

India].”¹⁷³ Thus, China’s increasing number of maritime deployments and its belligerency in the East China Sea, South China Sea, and the Indian Ocean are concerning among Indian elites and accelerating India’s military modernization process.

India is modernizing its military, engaging with like-minded partners, and increasing its nuclear capacity to compete with and challenge China’s growing footprint in the Indo-Pacific. Pant stresses that in response to China, India has begun “a process of military consolidation and build-up of key external partnerships.”¹⁷⁴ In 2012, following India’s purchase of a Russian nuclear submarine, it became the sixth state to possess and operate a nuclear-powered submarine, increasing India’s naval capacity.¹⁷⁵ The acquisition of a submarine-based nuclear arsenal is instrumental in India’s intent to have a credible second-strike capability.¹⁷⁶ Richard Bitzinger explains that “India is in the midst of upgrading its navy, acquiring several large surface combatants—including at least two and possibly three aircraft carriers—and over a dozen new submarines (both nuclear-and conventionally powered).”¹⁷⁷ According to Lt. Gen. S.L. Narasimhan (RETD), India now “has seven army commands, three naval commands, four air force commands and two tri service commands.”¹⁷⁸ Although India’s military modernization is still lagging behind China’s, India is utilizing additional methods to balance China’s advantage.

India is not only boosting up its defenses internally, but it is building it is taking external steps to bolster its defenses by engaging with compatible partners in pseudo coalitions designed to level the playing field with China. S. Paul Kapur and Diana Wueger

¹⁷³ Rajesh Rajagopalan, “India’s Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 2017, 6.

¹⁷⁴ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 27.

¹⁷⁵ “INS Chakra Inducted into Navy,” *The Hindu*, April 4, 2012, sec. National, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ins-chakra-inducted-into-navy/article3280078.ece>.

¹⁷⁶ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 28.

¹⁷⁷ Richard Bitzinger, “The Chinese People’s Liberation Army in Transition: Implications for Indian Defence,” in *Defence Primer 2018: An Indian Military in Transformation?*, ed. Pushan Das and Harsh V. Pant (2018): 24, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/defence-primer-2018-indian-military-transformation/>.

¹⁷⁸ S. L. Narasimhan, “Achieving India’s Military Goals in an Era of Transition,” in *Defence Primer 2018: An Indian Military in Transformation?*, ed. Pushan Das and Harsh V. Pant (2018): 31, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/defence-primer-2018-indian-military-transformation/>.

emphasize that “India has sought closer cooperation with like-minded countries such as Japan and Vietnam to coordinate regional military capabilities and responses that could offset rising Chinese power.”¹⁷⁹ Pant asserts that India’s “Look East Policy, originally aimed at strengthening economic ties with its Southeast Asian neighbors, has now led to naval exercises with Singapore, Thailand, and Indonesia.”¹⁸⁰ Additionally, India is more closely affiliating with the United States, Japan, and Australia in an effort to build strong defense cooperation to counter China’s increasing military role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).¹⁸¹ However, the most important partner for India is the United States, and vice versa.¹⁸² Overall, India’s increasingly close ties with the United States and other regional players highlight the growing continuity among these states and underscores their collective efforts to maintain the status quo.

In the nuclear realm, India and China exercise the capability and wherewithal to utilize nuclear weapons as a last resort. Nuclear weapons are a critical aspect of Sino-Indian relations. Kapur and Wueger state that

nuclear weapons have an important role to play in Sino-Indian security relations. They provide India the final measure of protection against a rising adversary that is engaged in increasingly competitive regional behavior, and with which India has a fraught history. Nuclear weapons cannot solve all of India’s China-related strategic problems ... but they do provide a layer of protection that will prevent China from threatening Indian survival or sovereignty.¹⁸³

Although nuclear weapons do not necessarily prevent war, they make the risk calculus more complex, imposing higher costs on both sides. Therefore, despite the asymmetry in Sino-Indian capabilities, China must consider the costs of its military deployments in the Indian Ocean.

¹⁷⁹ S. Paul Kapur and Diana Wueger, “Nuclear Weapons and Sino-Indian Security Relations,” in *Defence Primer 2018: An Indian Military in Transformation?*, ed. Pushan Das and Harsh V. Pant (2018): 94, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/defence-primer-2018-indian-military-transformation/>.

¹⁸⁰ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 32.

¹⁸¹ Morton, “China’s Ambition in the South China Sea,” 931.

¹⁸² Kapur and Wueger, “Nuclear Weapons and Sino-Indian Security Relations,” 94.

¹⁸³ Kapur and Wueger, 95.

c. *Border Tension: Escalation and Standoffs*

Sino-Indian border tensions consistently undermine efforts to increase bilateral cooperation. Bajpae contends that “at the root of mutual mistrust is the unresolved border dispute, which remains a thorn in the bilateral relationship.”¹⁸⁴ Although both states continue to meet regularly, through mechanisms such as special representatives, their efforts have yielded no border resolution. Bajpae argues “that China and India are hybrid powers—that is, both are established continental and emerging maritime powers—add [ing] to the complexity of the relationship and creat [ing] the potential for horizontal escalation.”¹⁸⁵ This escalation manifested in two highly publicized border disputes. The first took place in 2013 in Depsang and the second took place in Chumar in 2014.

China’s and India’s actions along the border led to a three-week standoff in Depsang as both sides accused the other of violating its sovereign territory.¹⁸⁶ Similarly, in 2014 China and India engaged in another border standoff in Chumar, accusing each other of violating the 2005 border protocol by attempting to build infrastructure in the contested area.¹⁸⁷ China’s and India’s military modernization has exacerbated border tensions as both sides have increased their presence and posture along the Line of Actual Control. Bajpae indicates that “both countries’ expanding military capabilities have served to deter the outbreak of an all-out war, [but] this has also fueled the proclivity for limited stand-offs along their contested border.”¹⁸⁸ Pant emphasizes that “China’s rapid expansion and modernization of its transport infrastructure across the border is forcing India to respond.”¹⁸⁹ The responses from both sides escalated into two major border standoffs,

¹⁸⁴ Bajpae, “China-India,” 112.

¹⁸⁵ Bajpae, 109.

¹⁸⁶ Manoj Joshi, “Making Sense of the Depsang Incursion,” *The Hindu*, May 7, 2013, sec. Comment, <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/making-sense-of-the-depsang-incursion/article4689838.ece>.

¹⁸⁷ “India, China Set to End 16-Day Chumar Stand-off by Saturday,” *Times of India*, accessed April 15, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-China-set-to-end-16-day-Chumar-stand-off-by-Saturday/articleshow/43467644.cms>.

¹⁸⁸ Bajpae, “China-India,” 109.

¹⁸⁹ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 24.

highlighting that compartmentalized border issues continue to bedevil efforts of cooperation.

2. Economic Competition: An Increasing Trade Deficit and Dueling Economic Development Strategies

Despite Sino-Indian coordination within economic institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the BRICS Development Bank, their economic relationship is best characterized as an ongoing struggle for regional influence. This struggle is highlighted by a growing trade imbalance and competing economic development strategies, and a battle for energy resources. Ratha and Mahapatra argue that “the competition over resources (oil, gas and water), overseas markets and bases, external overlapping spheres of influence, rival alliance relationships and ever-widening geopolitical horizons limit the chances of genuine Sino-Indian accommodation.”¹⁹⁰ In short, from 2012–2015, Sino-Indian economic relations plummeted as competing interests converged and both sides were unwilling to compromise.

a. Trade Imbalance

Sino-Indian bilateral trade has continued to soar to new heights, reaching approximately \$70 billion USD, but the growing imbalance in their trade is a critical strain on progressive economic relations. Despite growing Sino-Indian bilateral trade numbers and the conventional wisdom that deepening economic interdependence preserves cooperation, the opposite is occurring in Sino-Indian economic relations. Under the surface of these large bilateral trade numbers is a growing Indian trade deficit that reached \$48 billion USD in 2015, roughly 3% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁹¹ Moreover, in 2015 India’s total exports were \$276 billion and its total imports were \$369 billion, meaning India had a \$93 billion trade deficit. That same year India exported \$12 billion to China and imported \$59 billion from China, roughly a \$48 billion trade deficit with China. The nature of this trade imbalance poses a considerable problem for increased

¹⁹⁰ Ratha and Mahapatra, “Recasting Sino-Indian Relations,” 705.

¹⁹¹ Bajpaee, “China-India,” 110.

cooperation.¹⁹² Rajeswari Rajagopalan and Arka Biswas argue that “a trade imbalance has thus resulted in India’s overdependence on China giving the latter potentially greater leverage.”¹⁹³ Figure 2 highlights the steady increase in the trade imbalance. Although China and India are engaged in unprecedented levels of trade, the trade imbalance reveals an underlying issue that has long-term effects that can lead to negative Sino-Indian relations.

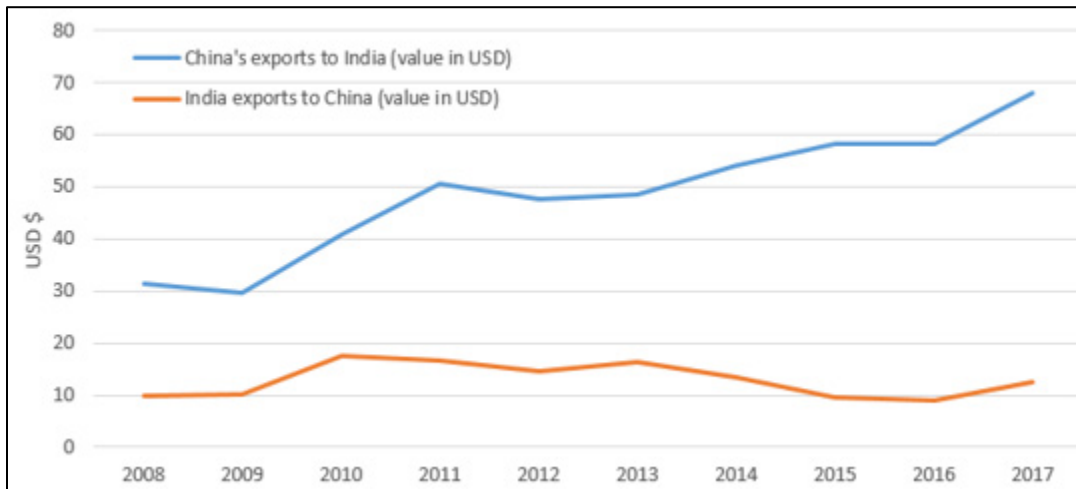


Figure 2. China’s exports to India and India’s exports to China, USD billions.¹⁹⁴

b. The OBOR Initiative: The Cornerstone of China’s Policy

Although the trade imbalance is important, the more critical aspect of the growing Sino-Indian conundrum centers on their dueling economic development strategies. Pant stresses that “Beijing’s means, both economic and military, to pursue its goals are greater than at any time in the recent past.”¹⁹⁵ China’s critical foreign policy program, known as

¹⁹² “Products That India Imports from China (2015),” The Observatory of Economic Complexity, accessed May 30, 2019, http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/ind/chn/show/2015/.

¹⁹³ Rajagopalan and Biswas, “India–China Relations under Xi Jinping: An Indian Perspective,” 121.

¹⁹⁴ “Bilateral Trade between India and China,” Trade Map, accessed December 5, 2018, https://www.trademap.org/Bilateral_TS.aspx?nvpm=1%7c699%7c%7c156%7c%7cTOTAL%7c%7c%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c2%7c2%7c1%7c1%7c1%7c1.

¹⁹⁵ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 27.

the One Belt, One Road Initiative (OBOR),¹⁹⁶ was introduced by President Xi in 2013 and has garnered widespread attention for its true motivations, multi-faceted goals, its long-term feasibility, and scale. Hong Yu highlights that “the Chinese government’s OBOR strategy forms a cornerstone of its new foreign policy.”¹⁹⁷ The OBOR is comprised of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road. The Silk Road Economic Belt focuses on building infrastructure to connect the mainland of China to Central Asia and Europe.¹⁹⁸ The Maritime Silk Road focuses on building port facilities along Southeast, South and North Asia to secure its sea lines of communication and valuable resources.¹⁹⁹ Ratha and Mahapatra explain that “the road connects with the belt through a series of corridors between new ports on the littoral and new trade routes in inner Asia.”²⁰⁰ Overall, China’s OBOR highlights its rise and punctuates a new era of competition for influence and resources.

c. Necklace of Diamonds and the Connect Central Asia Policies: An Indian Response to China’s Ambitious OBOR

India views Xi’s ambitious economic policy as a new, but very similar, version of the String of Pearls strategy, which aimed at containing India. Pant argues that “the real concern for India, however, is the number of projects that China has undertaken in these areas.”²⁰¹ To counter China, India is developing multiple strategies that hinge on revamping its military under policies such as Look East and Make in India, leveraging regional partners and building closer ties with the United States. However, in order to specifically compete with China’s economic policy, India first responded with its own form

¹⁹⁶ Different fields of research assign different monikers to this Initiative; many scholars will also refer to the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative).

¹⁹⁷ Hong Yu, “Motivation behind China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 26, no. 105 (May 4, 2017): 367, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2016.1245894>.

¹⁹⁸ Ratha and Mahapatra, “Recasting Sino-Indian Relations,” 700..

¹⁹⁹ Ratha and Mahapatra, 700.

²⁰⁰ Ratha and Mahapatra, 700.

²⁰¹ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 13.

of the String of Pearls known as the Necklace of Diamonds.²⁰² This strategy was designed to extend its maritime and economic reach to gain access to vital ports and make inroads with its neighbors.²⁰³ Additionally, India has recently developed a complementary venture known as Connect Central Asia. The strategy was launched in 2012 and is designed to build roads, rails, and energy pipelines that cross through the subcontinent, ultimately linking India to its Central Asian partners.²⁰⁴ Chaudhury explains that

a great game is unfolding in resource-rich, but landlocked, Central Asia, where China through its one-belt-one-road (OBOR) [sic] initiative is attempting to harness maximum mineral and hydrocarbon wealth as well as grow the market for its goods. India, not to be left behind, has also embarked on a Connect Central Asia policy, trying to overcome a disadvantage it has: lack of direct connectivity to the region.²⁰⁵

Overall, China and India are economically competing to acquire a larger footprint in the Indo-Pacific region and dueling to safeguard their maritime trade routes and vital resources. The common thread tying these issues together points back to issues of territorial sovereignty. India argues that China's OBOR infringes on its territorial sovereignty and its natural sphere of influence. Aspects of the OBOR, such as the China-Pakistan economic corridor, cross through the highly contested Pakistani and Indian territory of Kashmir. Additionally, OBOR projects near the 1962 border drives India to question China's overall motivations and intentions in the region.²⁰⁶ However, China makes historical claims to its initiatives to justify its new policies. The contention builds as India lays claim to central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, asserting that it has a natural right to this geostrategic

²⁰² C. Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 135.

²⁰³ Bajpae, "China-India," 122.

²⁰⁴ Shisheng Hu, Raffaello Pantucci, and Ravi Sawhney, "A Roadmap for Sino-Indian Co-Operation in Afghanistan," (occasional paper, Royal United Services Institute, July 2014), 7, https://rusi.org/sites/default/files/201407_op_sino-indian_co-operation.pdf.

²⁰⁵ Dipanjan Chaudhury, "India and China New Players in Central Asia's Great Game," *Economic Times*, accessed April 16, 2019, <https://www.economictimes.indiatimes.com>,

²⁰⁶ Darshana Baruah, "India's Answer to the Belt and Road: A Road Map for South Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (2018): 14.

area. Therefore, China's efforts to expand into central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region directly challenge India's sphere of influence.

3. Political Competition: New Leaders with Grand Strategies

Apart from economics, the contention manifests in the political sphere as China and India engage in competing foreign policy agendas driven by nationalism and institutional rivalry. Thomas Christensen contends that part of the reason Asia has become an arena for rivalry is due to "China's return to great power status [making it] perhaps the most important challenge in [the] twenty-first-century."²⁰⁷ Ratha and Mahapatra argue that "the seeds of confrontation are inherent between the two nations engaged in competition, at both the regional and global level."²⁰⁸ In short, the underlying factors influencing the shift from political cooperation to political rivalry are new assertive leadership driven by nationalistic narratives and an ever-growing competition within global institutions.

a. Assertive New Leadership

Xi Jinping's and Narendra Modi's rise to power has ushered in a new era of assertive foreign policy agendas. In 2012, the PRC embarked on a leadership transition from Hu Jintao to Xi Jinping, who quickly consolidated power and made sweeping domestic and foreign policy changes. To jumpstart his presidency, Xi Jinping raised the notion of the "Chinese Dream," describing its characteristics as "making continued efforts to achieve the great renewal of the Chinese nation, make the Chinese nation stand rock-firm in the family of nations, and make even greater contributions to mankind."²⁰⁹ Yu contends that "compared with his predecessors, Xi has abandoned China's long-held policy of keeping a low profile in international affairs' [sic] adhered to since the 1980s by the

²⁰⁷ Thomas J. Christensen, *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2015), 1.

²⁰⁸ Deepak Kapoor, "Chinese Provocation: Is India Prepared?," *Deccan Herald*, May 2, 2013, <https://www.deccanherald.com/content/329863/chinese-provocation-india-prepared.html>.

²⁰⁹ "Transcript: Xi Jinping's Speech at the Unveiling of the New Chinese Leadership (Video)," *South China Morning Post*, November 15, 2012, <https://www.scmp.com/news/18th-party-congress/article/1083153/transcript-xi-jinpings-speech-unveiling-new-chinese>.

previous leader Deng Xiaoping.”²¹⁰ He adds that “China’s foreign policy is now more centralized, proactive and even aggressive.”²¹¹ Xi Jinping has made it apparent, through increased land reclamation in the South China Sea (SCS) and increased deployments in and around the Indo-Pacific region, that China’s maritime territory and sovereignty are critical to its grand strategy of becoming a global power. Yu states that “Xi views the change to China’s foreign policy as necessary to match its ascendancy as the rising global power. Xi intends that China will one day become a rule-shaper in the global arena and regain a position of pre-eminence in the world.”²¹² Ultimately, China desires to shape a world order antithetical to Western values, fundamentally altering the current status quo not only in the region but in the world more broadly.

As China reshapes its regional policies, it is also working within international institutions to prevent other actors, such as India, from challenging its position. For example, Xi is aggressively working within global institutions to stymie India’s ascension. Ratha and Mahapatra argue that “China has clearly shown its hand against India, by working against the latter’s entry as a permanent member of the UN Security Council.”²¹³ Most notably, out of the five permanent member states wielding veto power, China has yet to extend its full-fledged support for India’s request for permanent member status.²¹⁴ Additionally, India has applied for membership within the Nuclear Suppliers Group but China has voted to prevent India’s membership status. The main reason China continuously votes this way is to prevent India from achieving great power status. Ultimately, China’s strategic positioning concerning India’s role within institutions comes down to China’s aim of becoming the unequivocal regional hegemon in Asia and eventually of the world.

Part of India’s response to China’s growing belligerency was the election of its own hard-nosed leader, Narendra Modi. In 2014, India elected Narendra Modi, a more

²¹⁰ Yu, “Motivation behind China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” 356.

²¹¹ Yu, 356.

²¹² Yu, 357.

²¹³ Ratha and Mahapatra, “Recasting Sino-Indian Relations,” 706.

²¹⁴ Kaura, “China on India’s UNSC Bid.”

conservative and nationalist figure from the Bharatiya Janata Party. The first instance of a stronger Indian stance toward China came during the 2014 Chumar border standoff. Kanti Bajpai argues that Modi “was prepared to be more aggressive militarily ... [and] the confrontation gave Modi the opportunity to complain about the Chinese behavior and to shift the terms of India-China interactions over the border dispute by means of public demarche.”²¹⁵ Pant stresses that “Indian policy trajectory toward China is evolving as India starts to pursue a policy of internal and external balancing more forcefully in an attempt to protect its core interests.”²¹⁶ Therefore, at the heart of Modi’s policy toward China is a deliberate push for a quick resolution to the border issue and securing a coalition to counter China’s growing assertiveness in the IOR.

Overall, both leaders have taken strong stances against the others’ policies, which have been driven by nationalistic fervor. Yu argues that “China’s proactive foreign policy has been influenced by the increasing sense of national pride that has accompanied the emergence of China as a global power and the world’s second largest economy.”²¹⁷ Similarly, Pant contends that “China’s recent hardening toward India might well be a function of its own internal vulnerabilities, but that is hardly a consolation to Indian policymakers who have to respond to a public that increasingly wants the country to assert itself in the region and beyond.”²¹⁸ Therefore, the two largest states in the world are emerging as global powers, both vying for influence in the Indo-Pacific.

C. BORDER TENSION IGNITES HOSTILITIES IN DOKLAM: 2016–2017

The competition quickly turned hostile and culminated in the Doklam border standoff, the most protracted border standoff since the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. According to Frank O’Donnell, “the Doklam standoff between Chinese and Indian troops

²¹⁵ Kanti Bajpai, “Narendra Modi’s Pakistan and China Policy: Assertive Bilateral Diplomacy, Active Coalition Diplomacy,” *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 81, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iw003>.

²¹⁶ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 36.

²¹⁷ Yu, “Motivation behind China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’ Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank,” 356.

²¹⁸ Pant, *The Growing Complexity of Sino-Indian Ties*, 26.

in the summer of 2017 coincided with an ongoing deterioration in bilateral relations and accelerated preexisting security dilemma dynamics.”²¹⁹ The standoff represents three underlying issues that have strained and continue to strain Sino-Indian relations: competing economic and military programs, which have created a growing security dilemma; nationalistic and assertive new leadership driving both sides to adopt more aggressive foreign policy agendas; and, the most important crippling factor, their unresolved territorial dispute.

1. Doklam Standoff: A New Era of Strained Bilateral Relations

The Doklam standoff is a multilayered issue spanning the scope of security, economics, and politics. O’Donnell explains that the “Doklam episode occurred against a backdrop of gradual modernizations of military forces and logistical networks along the Sino-Indian border that have affected the two countries’ perceptions of the other.”²²⁰ The border standoff started in June 2017 in a disputed area between China and Bhutan and lasted until late August 2017. The dispute centered on China’s efforts to build a road near the China-India-Bhutan tri-junction, which would have arguably given China a strategic foothold into India’s neighborhood. Therefore, Modi took an aggressive approach toward perceived Chinese aggression and ordered the Indian army to block and prevent China’s construction and its troop movement. The hard-nosed approach brought the two largest nuclear-capable states toe-to-toe, resulting in a 74-day border standoff—the longest such standoff since the 1962 border war. According to Ivan Lidarev,

[there are] two important issues. One is China-India competition for influence in Bhutan, which reflects the wider competition for influence in South Asia prompted by China’s growing power in the region and India’s desire to protect what it sees as its own sphere of interest. The other is the unresolved and increasingly unstable China-India territorial dispute, which has seen growing militarization in recent years, a destabilizing competition to build infrastructure around the de facto border, and frequent incidents

²¹⁹ O’Donnell, “Stabilizing Sino-Indian Security Relations,” 1.

²²⁰ O’Donnell, 3.

including in 2013 and 2014. Both issues indicate the tightening of the China-India security dilemma.²²¹

Bajpai argues that India's actions are a direct reflection of the shifting security environment, competition for economic influence, and Modi's more aggressive stance toward China.²²² China's and India's behavior along the border indicate frustration regarding the ineffectiveness of both sides' abilities to come to a favorable agreement regarding unresolved territory. Additionally, both states' actions highlight the nationalistic rhetoric emanating from their polarizing leaders. Overall, although the Doklam standoff highlights the complexities inherent in the 21st century, the heart of the issue lies in the fact that China and India have been unable to come to a mutually acceptable border agreement. Ultimately, the Doklam standoff punctuates a new era of strained bilateral relations.

D. CONCLUSION

After decades of mutual dysfunctional and mutual distrust between China and India, their relationship shifted toward cooperation following radical structural changes such as the global war on terrorism and the global financial crisis. Despite minor problems surrounding visa issues and Chinese aspirations to conduct economic projects in Central Asia, early 21st -century Sino-Indian relations were strong, highlighted by unprecedented economic development and bilateral trade. China and India moved to the forefront of many economic indices, and their bilateral trade reached nearly \$62 billion USD in 2011, punctuated by China becoming India's largest trading partner. Sino-Indian security and military relations integrated, and both states worked bilaterally and multilaterally through the SCO to combat separatism, extremism, and terrorism. Additionally, China and India successfully executed their first joint military exercise in 2007, creating what is now known as the annual Hand-in-Hand Sino-Indian military exercise. Sino-Indian political relations also expanded through confidence-building measures and pragmatic leadership highlighted

²²¹ Lidarev , "2017."

²²² Kanti Bajpai, "Modi's China Policy and the Road to Confrontation," *Pacific Affairs* 91, no. 2 (June 1, 2018): 245, <https://doi.org/10.5509/2018912245>.

by both governments agreeing to the ten-point strategy in 2010. The bilateral and regional success of their diplomatic relationship spilled over into international institutions where both states worked diligently to create a more equitable global system converging on critical global issues such as global governance, international trade, collective security arrangements, and climate change. Early 21st -century Sino-Indian relations demonstrated all the signs of a renewed Sino-Indian honeymoon reminiscent of the early 1950s.

However, in the second decade of the 21st century, the honeymoon phase quickly shifted toward competition and conflict. The complexities imposed by each states' interpretation of territorial sovereignty and desire for resources and influence in the Indo-Pacific region spiraled into a security dilemma, as both states built dueling military, economic, and political strategies. China and India embarked on military modernization programs that were predicated on better defending their national security interests; however, as China's program vastly outpaced India's it created insecurity and fear within the government of India, leading India to expand its military and security arrangements. India began working with partners in the region, such as Japan and Australia, and international actors, such as the United States, ultimately creating fear in China of a containment strategy. Economically, a similar spiral effect was occurring. Sino-Indian economic relations began to unravel as India's trade imbalance with China grew to nearly \$50 billion USD in 2015, indicating an overreliance on China.

Additionally, China's cornerstone foreign policy known as the OBOR threatened to impede on what India describes as its sphere of influence—central Asia and the IOR. China's aggressive actions in the East China Sea (ECS) and SCS made India wary of China's momentum into the IOR and central Asia. Politically and diplomatically, new leadership also changed Sino-Indian relations. Xi and Modi are proactive, aggressive, and nationalistic figures who desire to rejuvenate their status as great powers, fundamentally ushering in a competitive dynamic between the two states as they vie for similar resources and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Due to both states' dueling military, economic, and political strategies, longstanding border issues resurfaced, highlighting a new era of Sino-Indian rivalry. The Doklam standoff in 2017 represents the convergence of interests

and a newfound competition and conflict that continue to characterize the Sino-Indian relationship.

In short, this chapter has demonstrated that early 21st -century Sino-Indian relations appeared promising given unprecedented economic integration, bilateral and multilateral security cooperation, and pragmatic leadership. However, rivalry quickly arose as competing military, economic, and political strategies reignited border tensions. Competition for power and influence in Central Asia and in the IOR exacerbate the growing tension. Unresolved border issues remain an obstacle for cooperation and underpin fundamental differences. Overall, China and India are engaged in a classic security dilemma with the potential for increased border standoffs that can spill over into the IOR as they jockey for power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

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IV. SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS: A ROCKY WAY AHEAD

This thesis research focused on Sino-Indian relations, analyzing two distinct periods—1950-1962 and 2008–2017—and highlighting the factors that led to cooperation, competition, and conflict. The first objective of this thesis research was to understand the factors that led to positive and negative Sino-Indian relations from the 1950s until the culmination of the 1962 Sino-Indian border war. The second objective was to take the factors from the 1950s and identify if they were prevalent in the 21st-century Sino-Indian relationship. Despite the nuances of the 21st century, Sino-Indian relations from 2008–2017 followed a similar trajectory and culminated in the 2017 Doklam border standoff—the longest border standoff since the 1962 border war. Although these two time intervals are vastly different, certain factors exist across both periods that cultivated positive and negative Sino-Indian relations. The factors that led to cooperation and discord from 1950–1962 transformed Sino-Indian relations from ‘China and India are brothers’ (*Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai*) to rivalry and war. The 21st-century Sino-Indian relationship is on the cusp of a similar trajectory, with the potential to impact the bilateral, regional, and international domains significantly. This chapter concludes the research by summarizing the main factors that led to cooperation, competition, and conflict during both periods and by briefly addressing the implications for future Sino-Indian relations. In short, Sino-Indian relations are critical to the stability of the Indo-Pacific region; however, unresolved territorial disputes, competition for energy resources, a race for regional influence, and assertive leadership have hindered cooperation. These factors will likely continue into the future, creating a rocky way ahead for the Indo-Pacific region.

A. MAIN FINDINGS

From 1950–1962, Sino-Indian relations were characterized by cooperation, competition, and conflict, ultimately drifting from friendship to foe. Three primary factors led to cooperation: a legacy of Western imperialism; structural changes, such as cold war dynamics; and similar regional and global security concerns that centered on the threat imposed by the United States. In 1954, the Panchsheel Agreement was signed, capturing

the peak of Sino-Indian relations. The agreement highlights five foundational principles: “mutual respect for each other’s territorial integrity and sovereignty; mutual non-aggression; mutual non-interference in each other’s internal affairs; equality and mutual benefit; and peaceful coexistence.”²²³ China and India championed this framework with the hope of revamping international relations.

However, from 1956–1959, Sino-Indian relations shifted from cooperation toward competition, setting the tone for an intense rivalry. Two primary factors underscored the rivalry: competition for regional influence, which was most evident following the Bandung Conference, and unresolved territorial claims highlighted by disagreements over the McMahon Line and the status of Tibet. In 1955, China and India championed the Panchsheel Agreement to third-world countries at the Bandung Conference; however, the conference resulted in open competition between Indian Prime Minister Nehru and China’s leader, Mao Zedong, over who would have the more significant influence in the region and in the third-world more broadly.²²⁴ The rivalry amplified as India became frustrated with China’s momentum into perceived Indian territory in the Northeast sector. Additionally, the status of Tibet became a point of contention, as China’s actions in Tibet grew increasingly assertive, leading to the Tibetan rebellion in 1959. Overall, diplomatic efforts to overcome the disagreements failed, and Sino-Indian relations started to unravel.

From 1960–1962, Sino-Indian relations erupted in open conflict along their shared border. Two primary factors led to the Sino-Indian border war: ongoing border issues that could not be resolved through diplomatic channels, as neither leader could come to a fair compromise, and assertive policy agendas by Nehru and Mao, exemplified by Nehru’s Forward Policy and Mao’s response. In 1960, Nehru and China’s second in command, Premier Zhou Enlai, met on several occasions to discuss solutions for the contested borders, but uncompromising resolve set the stage for aggressive actions by both states.²²⁵ Chinese policy continued to develop infrastructure projects along the unresolved border, inciting

²²³ Gillian Hui Lynn Goh, “China and India: Towards Greater Cooperation and Exchange,” *China: An International Journal* 4, no. 2 (2006): 266, <https://doi.org/10.1353/chn.2006.0013>.

²²⁴ Garver, *Protracted Contest*, 119.

²²⁵ Liu, *The Sino-Indian Border Dispute and Sino-Indian Relations*, 20.

Nehru to take a hard stance against perceived Chinese border violations. Thus, Nehru launched the Forward Policy, designed to seize and hold land established as India's under the McMahon line.²²⁶ However, in October 1962, China responded by attacking Indian soldiers who were inching forward, destroying India's efforts in less than one month and utterly humiliating Nehru.²²⁷ The 1962 border war marked the official end of *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* and ushered in a contentious adversarial relationship that lasted for nearly 30 years.

Following decades of rivalry and competition, China and India embarked on a path toward renewed friendship in the early 21st-century. From 2008–2011, Sino-Indian relations were largely considered cooperative, influenced by three factors: similar regional security threats brought on by the 9/11 attacks; a mutual desire to increase economic integration, highlighted by China becoming India's largest trading partner in 2008; and pragmatic leadership focused on increasing confidence-building measures.²²⁸ The structural changes influenced by the 9/11 attacks led China and India to expand their military and security cooperation, culminating in joint anti-terrorism training and marking a new level of military-to-military cooperation. Additionally, the leaders of both states regularly stressed the importance of stronger relations, championing policies such as the Ten-Point Strategy, designed to increase all levels of Sino-Indian relations.²²⁹ Nevertheless, across this time period, the most critical factor lending itself to stronger Sino-Indian cooperation was the integration of the two economies.

From 2012–2015, Sino-Indian relations shifted from cooperative to competitive. In the second decade of the 21st century, Sino-Indian relations became interlocked in a security dilemma influenced by dueling military modernization programs, competing economic development strategies, and assertive new leadership. The pace of China's military modernization grew increasingly concerning to the region and, most notably, to

²²⁶ Kennedy, *The International Ambitions of Mao and Nehru*, 229.

²²⁷ Garver, "China's Decision for War with India in 1962," 103–5, 122.

²²⁸ Scott, "Sino-Indian Security Predicaments for the Twenty-First Century," 260.

²²⁹ "A Ten-Pronged Strategy."

India. China's expansive naval programs have changed the PLAN from a brown-water fleet to a blue-water fleet, demonstrating extended capabilities and ambitions. Additionally, China's nuclear capabilities have increased and helped drive India and the United States to solidify the U.S.-Civil Nuclear agreement in 2008. Prior to that watershed nuclear deal, India responded to Chinese nuclear power with its own nuclear tests in 1974 and 1998. Thus, India has modernized (and continues to modernize) its military programs as a result of growing fear of China's capabilities and motives. Although India has developed internal balancing strategies against China, India has also pursued external balancing mechanisms through engaging states such as the United States and Japan to establish potential security alliances given China's growing might.

On the economic front, China's industrial and commercial projects along India's periphery caused widespread concern in New Delhi as its elites feared Beijing encroaching on its sphere of influence, primarily Central Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. China's cornerstone foreign policy, the OBOR, has not only infringed on India's sphere of influence, but the infrastructure projects connecting Pakistan to China cross the highly contested Indo-Pakistani border area of Jammu and Kashmir have reignited territorial disputes.²³⁰ One factor driving China's and India's economic projects is their requirements for energy resources to support their vast populations. The finite aspect of energy resources and China's and India's necessity for and reliance on them have turned energy resources into a critical component fueling more rivalry.

The most critical factor highlighting the competitive environment between China and India is their assertive leaders, Modi and Xi. Both leaders have far-reaching objectives influenced by nationalist narratives, which have resulted in assertive foreign policy agendas that undercut bilateral Sino-Indian relations. The factors that caused rivalry and competition in the Sino-Indian relationship led to conflict along their shared border in 2017. From 2016–2017, Sino-Indian relations deteriorated as a result of unresolved territorial disputes dating back to the 1950s and Modi's and Xi's aggressive policies. In

²³⁰ "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor - Opportunities and Risks" (working paper [Report no. 297], International Crisis Group, June 29, 2018), 16, https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/297-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-opportunities-and-risks_0.pdf.

June 2017, China and India engaged in a border standoff along the Doklam Plateau lasting 73 days, and even though no shots were fired, this was the most protracted and tense border standoff since the 1962 border war. The Doklam standoff punctuates a new era of tense Sino-Indian relations.

Although these periods are vastly different, similar factors demonstrate strong correlation for cooperation, competition, and conflict. Overall, during both time intervals, it is evident that when China and India share a common security threat—the United States in the 1950s and terrorists in the 21st-century—and seek economic integration, cooperation increases. Conversely, it is evident that when China and India expand their reach via military, economic, institutional, or political means, it creates a security dilemma and increases competition between both states. The most critical factors relevant to both periods are their unresolved border issues and assertive leadership. Minimizing these two factors will increase overall Sino-Indian relations, but the amplified complexity of modern international relations will challenge China's and India's abilities to build stronger relations.

In sum, over the last decade, China and India have risen to prominence; however, China has developed into the stronger of the two. China is widely considered a regional power, wielding the ability to alter the geopolitics, geo-economics, and the geo-security in the Indo-Pacific region. China's capabilities, current trajectory, and clearly stated policy concerning its future ambitions have caused widespread concern over the future of the Indo-Pacific region and the rules-based international system the United States has maintained since the end of World War II. According to Robert Blackwill, based on China's stated objectives, it has a clear grand strategy predicated on "the accumulation of comprehensive national power," aiming to transcend any other Asian rival.²³¹ Thus, India is concerned with China's future trajectory in the region, which has strained their bilateral relationship. Although India is not yet a regional power, it is striving to become one in the near future; but, China appears poised to prevent India's rise. Ultimately, these two Asian

²³¹ Robert D. Blackwill, "China's Strategy for Asia: Maximize Power, Replace America," *National Interest*, May 26, 2016, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-strategy-asia-maximize-power-replace-america-16359>.

giants will need to determine how to coexist as two regional powers with convergent interests. If the last 65 years of Sino-Indian relations are predictive of their future relationship, it is imperative that both states identify lessons from the past in order to improve their future relationship. However, based on China's clearly articulated objectives, India will need to grapple with how to balance working with China, leveraging U.S. support, and maintaining its autonomy in the Indo-Pacific region. Not only will India need to grapple with this reality, but the United States' foreign policy in the region may need to tread lightly given the potentially global ramifications of instigating either cooperative or conflictual Sino-Indian outcomes. Nonetheless, Sino-Indian relations will be the center of political discourse for decades to come.

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