

## **India-China Relations: Key is Symmetry**

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### **Hard-Soft line, Bad-Good Cops & Dual Response**

The recent Chinese attempt to change the Line of control in Ladakh by setting up a post 19 miles inside Indian territory and well inside the current line of control, about a month prior to the

first visit of new premier Li Qiang has been compared by the Author to a similar pattern of action regarding Arunachal Pradesh in the mid-2000s.<sup>1</sup> This analysis showed that China's behavior towards India seems to alternate between a hard line and soft-line one, which in a Ying-Yang pattern, operationally resembles the classic "Good cop, Bad cop" behavior of police in Western culture. This confirmed earlier analysis that had led the author to suggest that India respond by adopting a dual policy of building defenses (physical and diplomatic) to deter aggression, while simultaneously trying to build better mutual understanding through dialogue and economic and cultural relations.<sup>2</sup>

Analysts have also pointed out that this was the most serious (physically aggressive), incident since the Sumdromg Chu valley incursion in 1986. As such the Sumdromg Chu incident also provides us lessons in understanding China's behavior and how to deal with the aggressive, hardline, bad cop aspects of this behavior, while keeping our cool and maintaining a dialogue with the "soft line," "peaceful rise", good cop elements in China's leadership. This validates the approach of "Carrying a big (bigger) stick while talking softly."

## Symmetry Strategy

This broad approach can be implemented through a "Symmetry Strategy."<sup>3</sup> Using an analogy from physics, the Symmetry Strategy would be similar to creating a shield of "anti-particles"(anti-matter) around us so that any "particle" (matter) that China aims at us is neutralized before reaching us. Or less elaborately, creating a mirror image policy (anti-particle) for every negative policy (particle) aimed at us or affecting us, to neutralize it (anti-matter and matter annihilate each other).

The most fundamental asymmetry is between the size of India's and China's economy and the consequent asymmetry in defense expenditures. The correction of this asymmetry requires a restoration of Indian growth to 8% per annum and to maintain it there for a couple of decades, as China's growth slows below 8%.<sup>4</sup> The other asymmetries requiring correction relate to foreign and defense policies.

## Past Asymmetry

There are three areas where the Indian desire for "Peace" has led India to not undertake actions that may offend China, while China had no compunctions about taking similar actions that deeply hurt India and offends Indians. These are,

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<sup>1</sup> <http://dravirmani.blogspot.in/2013/05/chinese-checkers-in-arunachal-and-ladakh.html>. Also see, <http://dravirmani.blogspot.in/2013/03/india-china-relations.html>. Amore recent example of this is a Chinese think tanks claims on Okinawa.

<sup>2</sup> <https://sites.google.com/site/dravindvirmani/policy-papers>, or <https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxkcmFydmluZHZpcml8Z3g6NGViZDAxOGY4Y2RmY2ZmNA>

<sup>3</sup> This policy differs from Super Symmetry (below), which could be described as a policy of "Do onto others what they are doing to you."

<sup>4</sup> See papers on India's growth at <https://sites.google.com/site/dravindvirmani/growth>. The author forecasts of global growth have long (early 2000s) assumed a decline of China's average growth below 8% by around the middle of this decade. See papers at, <https://sites.google.com/site/dravindvirmani/india-great-power>.

- (1) China's aggressive defense of "Core national interests," and the expansion of the boundaries of these interests since 1980.<sup>5</sup>
- (2) China's use of Selective Nuclear Proliferation as an instrument of Party policy.
- (3) The buildup of infrastructure in and to Tibet, for use by Police, Military and migrants.
- (4) Export of China's Goods, Services and Capital and Import of Technology (through all means).

## Core Interests

A symmetric approach, therefore requires a clear definition and defense of our "core national interest." The States of Jammu and Kashmir(J&K) and Arunachal Pradesh are an essential element of democratic, multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic India (our core national interest). India's core interest of **secularism** is grounded in a history of welcoming and hosting all major religions of the world as well as those escaping prosecution from other countries. The maintaining of secular polity is as much, if not more of a core interest of democratic India, than "**Social stability**" is for China. Correspondingly J&K and Arunachal Pradesh are as much the core national interest of India as the autonomous regions of Tibet and Jinxiang and the island of Taiwan are of China. Similarly China's references to "One China Policy," can be counterpoised with a "One India policy," along the line that Indian diplomats already seem to have started doing.

The Bay of Bengal, the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean are as important to India as the East China Sea and the South China Sea are to China. If it is important for China to have strong bilateral relations with Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar, it is equally important for India to have strong bilateral relations with Japan, S Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia and Australia. The old colonial and perhaps Neo-colonial illusions of "Watch what we say not what we do," will not work in this new globalized and information-ally connected world. India has the right to develop as close a defense technology relationship with Japan as China has with Pakistan: India and Japan must become, "All weather friends" a la China and Pakistan.

## Deterrence

The Indian political class has long believed that economic asymmetry with China, means that we must act and behave in a manner that does not offend them. There are several mistaken assumptions underlying this belief that need to be corrected: First overall economic asymmetry does not mean you cannot defend yourself against attack or deter such attacks in the first place. Pakistan has demonstrated over half a century how an economy 1/15 the size of India can not only defend itself, but attack it directly and indirectly while deterring India from military and other counter action. They have done this through highly skillful and effective diplomacy, till the Frankenstein of Jihad destroyed their credibility and constrained their policy and behavior. The USSR with 1/4<sup>th</sup> to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of the US economy showed that it could make the World Bipolar. Second, the Gandhian principle of 'turning the other cheek,' no matter how noble it is in an individual context, is not an effective method of achieving peace. Deterrence, which raises the cost and/or risk of aggression, is. The most effective way to reduce the probability of War is by developing enough military might and diplomatic support to deter aggression.

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<sup>5</sup> Based on Sun Tzu's classic, The Art of War, Henry Kissinger in "On China" terms China's strategy "Aggressive Deterrence."

## Infrastructure Buildup

This fundamental flaw in our earlier reasoning led to a border policy that resulted in under development of border states and border areas, for fear that good infrastructure connectivity with the rest of India, would allow China to walk off the Tibet plateau into our valleys and thence into the Indo-Gangetic heartland. This self-destructive policy of Isolating and sanitizing ('inner line permits') the border areas has rightly been given up. In the meantime China has built a high quality civilian and military infrastructure connecting Tibet to the rest of China and blanketing Tibet itself right up to the border. Symmetry demands that we unapologetically do the same vis-à-vis Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. When China can send thousands of Han migrants into Tibet, India has an equal right to facilitate the migration of its Ladakhi residents into the border areas. Likewise for Arunachal and the middle sector. The recent Indian approach to building up border infrastructure and forward defense (airfields, strike corp) is the right one, but like all else in India the resources and attention devoted to it by the political and bureaucratic apparatus may flag unless public pressure is maintained.

A suggestion for transferring control of ITBP from the home ministry to the army should be considered more seriously setting aside turf considerations in the National interest. We must improve our surveillance architecture to detect more quickly, attempts to build structures inside the LAC and to design and develop military counter moves that can be implemented quickly and effectively by the Army. These need not be in the same place in which China has a strategic interest or tactical advantage, but could be in an area of interest, value or advantage to us. As speed is of the essence, the Army should be authorized to take initial reactions quickly.

One element is however, still missing: This is a policy of encouraging and supporting Ladakh residents to fully and actively exploit the Natural resources of Leh district up to the line of control. A civilian Ladakh border development authority could be set up to undertake this effort.<sup>6</sup>

## Aggressive Deterrence or Diplomacy

Some analysts have argued that we should also adopt the Chinese policy of Aggressive deterrence, by undertaking tit for tat military incursions on the Chinese side of the LAC, raising questions about Tibetan autonomy and religious-human rights, developing military ties with Taiwan and supplying nuclear technology to Vietnam and others. In my view this goes a little beyond symmetry to mimicking their worst behavior and thus losing our democratic distinctiveness. To continue with the Physics analogy this would be a bit like replacing "Strategic Symmetry" by "Super Symmetry." Without ruling it completely, I would not recommend adopting this approach at the current time. However we should push defense and nuclear co-operation more aggressively, without constantly looking over our shoulders for China's reaction.

There are three elements of aggressive diplomacy we must pursue are;

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<sup>6</sup> Former Ambassador P Stobdan made some suggestions in an Op ed article in the Indian express of April 26, 2013. <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/the-ladakh-drift/1107668/0#sthash.ZqDvQ6Jj.dpuf>: "Distribute the land from Chumur to Karakoram among the local population of Leh district. Build infrastructure, populate the area, reactivate nomadic herding, and provide them with the wherewithal to fight the vagaries of nature. The J&K government should appoint more patwaris to maintain ground reports of the area."

(a) Making our case on the Border and China's aggressive behavior known to Global opinion makers. A map of China's claim line in 1960s as presented by China's PM Chou En Lai must be printed, distributed and explained to all analysts, diplomats and media interested in China's relations with other countries(including India). Further our willingness to make reasonable trade-offs between claims in the West and East should be made known to these opinion makers.

(b) A Forward policy on bilateral defense co-operation with all strategically important countries and co-operation in defense production and R&D with all countries with more advanced capabilities than ours (in any area). This would include framework agreements for co-operation between the Indian private sector and the private sectors of each of these countries. As we have historically never favored multilateral institutional co-operation in defense (e.g . CENTO, SEATO) and China appears hyper-sensitive to multi-lateral co-operation around its borders, there is no harm in down playing this element at the current time.

(c) Nuclear co-operation can and should be pursued more forthrightly within the international non-proliferation agreements that we have signed or committed to. We must step up nuclear co-operation with democratic Japan, S Korea, Australia, Israel, Germany and Canada by an order of magnitude. We have long resisted closer nuclear co-operation with Vietnam and Taiwan. Though our policies should not and must not show the same disregard for international rules, we can perhaps use this lever to induce China to take a more benign attitude to India's entry into the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Another lever that needs reconsideration is the development of technology for building mega-ton thermonuclear weapons.

## **Economic Balance**

When discussing Sino-Indian economic relations we generally talk of total Trade, less about the fact that 75-80% of the total is India's Trade deficit with China. This has begun to change. Symmetry requires that we highlight and analyze and discuss the massive imbalance between China's exports to India and India's exports to China and work to restore the trade balance. This will not be easy given the export-investment led growth strategy that is still being pursued by China Inc. We should participate actively in discussions of China's controlled exchange rate that barely moves despite large surpluses.

China Inc also has a strong interest in exporting project and construction services and capital equipment to India. They are also willing to provide longer term low risk loans and equity capital . This favors sectors like Telecom. However, with respect to such a "sensitive sector," we should not be diffident about raising security concerns regarding companies controlled by the PLA or Communist Party linked (so called) private individuals.

With China's real per capita income about 2.3 times that of India (PC GDP ppp) and nominal per capita income over 4 times that of India, the real and market wage differential should approach those ratios as China liberalizes labor mobility and wages. Much of the labor intensive export oriented manufacturing sector would then become enormously uncompetitive. There is a unique opportunity for China to transfer most of this exportable sector to India and make increased profits, while gaining enormous good will in India by creating jobs. The Indian Government, economic analysts and media should be researching, publicizing and propagating this case.

## Conclusion

India needs to take a much less diffident stance towards China. We must pursue a more active approach to developing defense co-operation between the private sectors of India and those of other democratic countries like Japan, Germany and the USA and even S Korea and Australia. This should cover both defense production and R&D. The Indian government must simultaneously raise the limits for FDI in Defense to 74% to facilitate this process. India must also take a much clearer diplomatic approach to defining and presenting our core interests to the World.