

Chapter -2

India and China strategic relations

On 1 April 1950, India became the first country among non-socialist countries to establish diplomatic relations with New China, thus leaving behind a thick stroke of writing in the archives of friends relations between India and China, the two large countries in Asia, have entered a new era. From 1950 to 1958, India- China relation witnessed a friendly ‘honey moon’ phase, with the slogan of ‘Hindi- ChiniBhai-Bhai’ resounding across the land of both countries. However , it was indeed very unfortunate that India-China relation sharply deteriorated after 1959 owing to their differences on the Tibet question and Indo- China boundary question and under the influence of a number of complicated factors , both international and internal , leading to the border conflict in 1962 and confrontation between the two countries for more than ten years. Since 1976 India- China relations were gradually restored and improved because now china became a member of united nation just because of Indian support, after the death of Mao India China relation became a smooth.

In 1988, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China became a major turning point for Indo- China relation, which entered a new period of overall restoration and development after that, with only a short setback in 1998 after India’s nuclear test. With the beginning of the new century, a rapid development of India – China relations was achieved and a strategic and Cooperative Partnership was established in 2005. In general, India is one of China’s neighbors with whom China’s relationship has witnessed big ups and downs after the founding of new China.¹

Recent events related to India China relations have highlighted the significance of security and strategic aspects. At the traditional security level, in the last few year, the Chinese side is firming up its position on the border dispute in the Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim sectors,

with 270 border transgressions in 2008, infrastructure improvements in Tibet and China's military modernization efforts rise in defense budget and successful conduct of the anti-satellite test in 2007 and the interceptor 60,000 troops and deploy two squadrons (36) of Su-30 MKI multirole fighter aircraft in Arunachal Pradesh, construct eleven strategic roads connecting the trans Himalayan border regions and step up its military modernization aspects.² On the other hand regarding the 'non traditional security' aspects such as counter terrorism, energy issues and hydrological data exchange of river waters, some recent cooperation between the two countries is visible. Economic interdependence is also increasing.

This chapter examines the China's meteoric rise in the past two decades and the policies economic diplomatic and military-it has followed. It discusses the various options available to India to meet a possible Chinese challenge and also offers certain policy prescriptions.

Strategic Partnership Benefits

Firstly the difference between "strategic cooperation" and "strategic partnership" needs to be understood. Strategic cooperation would imply amore proximate exchange and coordination of views by both countries to the common challenges posed in the economic, political and security spheres. "Strategic partnership" on the other hand would imply a relationship which would not only incorporate strategic cooperation but also an added emphasis on converting the strategic convergences between two nations into more meaningful defense and security cooperation, joint military training and exercises, defense production and hi-technology exchanges, and shouldering of some common security commitments. This in fact implies an evolving alliance relationship, but short of it.

In addition to the very obvious economic benefit which both India and China will enjoy, a strategic partnership between the two countries will also lead to large scale geo-economic, geo-political and geo-strategic advantage such as:

- (a) Alter the global balance of power from a unilateral one to amulet-lateral one.
- (b) India and China occupy a major area of the heart land of Asia; this area will get stabilized automatically.
- (c) The degree to which both India and China try and spread their individual influence and dominance in South and South-East Asia will reduce and this region will also benefit from stabilization.
- (d) A China-India strategic partnership could make a Russia-India-China strategic triangle a viable proposition. Presently, this triangle is unworkable because of differences in the China-India relations.
- (e) International security environment as painted by the United States depicts China as a threat to Asia-Pacific security. Strategic cooperation with the other major Asian country could help China in mitigating this image.
- (f) India's normalizing of relations with China and moving toward strategic partnership could open the way for India's enhanced economic integration with East Asia and the ASEAN region, and closer ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.
- (g) India could hope for energy security benefits from the Central Asia region in collaboration with China.
- (h) The China-Pakistan strategic nexus will get diluted with time.

China would benefit immensely from the very large Indian market. Partnership with India would not only provide safer passage of their trade and oil in the vulnerable India Ocean, but China would also get access to more port facilities in the Indian Ocean region.

For India, normalizing of relations with China and moving towards a strategic partnership could open the way for its enhanced economic integration with East Asia and the ASEAN region. India could hope for energy security benefits from the Central Asia region in collaboration with China. Most importantly the China-Pakistan strategic nexus will get diluted with time.

China's Encirclement of India or String of Pearls

China maritime relations with South Asia are interpreted as part of a perceived Chinese encirclement of India. The articulations China's 'String of Pearls' brings in to sharp focus the maritime dimension of this encirclement.⁴

The phrase 'String of Pearls' was first used to describe China's emerging maritime strategy in a report entitled Energy Futures in Asia by defense contractor Booz Allen- Hamilton. This report was commissioned by the Office of Net Assessment of US Department of Defense in 2005. The 'String of Pearls' extends from the coast of mainland China, through the littorals of the South China sea, the Straits of Malacca and the India Ocean, to the littorals of the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The specific 'pearls' in the 'String' as originally articulated, consisted of Hainan Island with its recently upgraded military facilities; an upgraded airstrip on Woody Island in the Paracel archipelago; the Gwadar in Pakistan ,Hambantota in Sri Lanka, Chittagong in Bangladesh and Kyaukphyu in Myanmar are all being developed with Chinese assistance. Projects for construction of ports and airfields, diplomatic ties, and force modernization are the essence of the 'String of Pearls';⁵

India's Neighbours

Pakistan

There is a direct attempt to befriend India's smaller neighbours with dosages of massive assistance and exploitation irritants between India and its neighbours to China's advantage of course Pakistan's anti India stance has always been supported by China, making it a proxy for Chinese intentions toward India. In President Hu Jintao's words, the China –Pak relationship is 'higher than the mountains and deeper than the seas'.

China has been instrumental in assisting Pakistan in becoming a nuclear power as well as providing the delivery means for its nuclear arsenal. Pakistan's first nuclear device was tested at Lop Nor in China in 1990. China is now providing technology to Pakistan to develop the alternative plutonium route for production of nuclear weapons. Likewise, having initially provided M-9 and M-11 missiles to Pakistan, it has paid for Pakistan's acquisition of Nodong and Taepodong missiles from North Korea, Currently, most of the hardware for the Pakistan military, such as tanks, artillery, aircrafts and communications equipment, is being provided by China either gratis or at friendly rates. During Pakistan Prime Minister Gilani's visit to China in May 2011, the schedule for providing 50 JF-17 fighter aircraft was expedited and negotiations for providing J-20 stealth fighters commenced. ⁶

In infrastructure, China's flagship project in Pakistan is Gwadar Deep Sea Project (GDSP) close to the Strait of Hormuz and the development of the Makran Coast Highway. The then President Pervez Musharraf and Vice Premier Wu Banggou laid the foundation stone of the GDSP in 2002. China provided financial and technological support for the construction of this large port that has dual use capability. Commercially, the Gwadar project would decrease overcrowding at Karachi and provide facilities for transshipment of cargo, including gas from and to Central Asian States, Xinjiang in China, and Afghanistan. In military strategic terms GDSP facilities monitoring the sea lanes from the Persian Gulf and forward deployment of People Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) assets. The GDPS venture has the potential to be

exploited by both sides against India in the future as and when China builds up its naval presence in the region.⁷

Simultaneously, it has also been helping Pakistan in repairing and upgrading the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and has promised to help in the construction of other roads. Since its completion in the 1970s, the highway has been used for limited trade and travel. In a strict strategic sense, Karakoram Highway is considered priceless.⁸ It gives Beijing unhindered access to Jammu and Kashmir in India, in addition to enabling it to block India's movement along Aksai Chin, which seized from India in 1962, and sever India's land link to China's turbulent autonomous region of Tibet and Xinjiang.⁹ Since then, China and Pakistan have agreed to widen the roadway to accommodate larger vehicles with heavier freight. This will enable China to ship energy supplies from the Middle East through Gwadar Port in Baluchistan, a stone's throw from the strategic Strait of Hormuz, via the Karakoram Highway land route to Western China, which is its development hub. This alternative energy supply route will reduce Beijing's dependence on the Malacca straits.¹⁰

Myanmar

Throughout the 1990s, Chinese firms were involved in Modernizing and constructing numerous facilities along Myanmar's coasts in the Andaman Sea and the Bay of Bengal.¹¹

Myanmar's adversarial relations with the Western governments and the consequent economic sanctions have forced its military rulers to look up to their northern neighbour China, for political and military support. Beijing has ably supported Myanmar through its difficult times of international isolation and, has been the strongest supporter assuring the Myanmarese Junta of security. Also, Beijing has leveraged Myanmar as a brinkmanship actor and support for China in South Asia.

In essence, China has been able to neutralize India's domination by making diplomatic, military and economic inroads into Myanmar. China built infrastructure in Myanmar includes roads, communication and intelligence networks, as well as military facilities. A large proportion of Myanmar's military hardware, including ships, aircrafts, missiles, tanks, and electronic equipment is of Chinese origin. China has also built several electronic intelligence systems along the Myanmar coast at Hainggyi, Khaukphyu, Mergui and ZadetkyiKyun. The facility at the Great Coca Island in the Bay of Bengal is especially meant of monitoring Indian space and naval activity in the Andaman Islands and also to observe maritime traffic in the Straits of Malacca.

In 1992, Beijing and Myanmar agreed to modernize the Myanmar naval facilities, including Hainggyi Island. Hainggyi will be able to support the berthing of People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) vessels, including nuclear submarines. China has also helped upgrade the road and rail network system from Yunan in South China to Several ports along the Myanmar coast in the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar is sitting atop a gas lake, over 270,000 sq K.M wide, in the Bay of Bengal. Chinese companies are engaged in offshore gas exploration in Myanmar. In January 2007, the China National Petroleum Cooperation (CNPC), Sinopec and the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) signed exploration and production sharing deals with Myanmar in its west coast off shore projects.

Work on pipeline linking a deep water port in Sittwe with Kunmin, the provincial capital of Yunan, is planned to commence in September 2009. This would result in two pipelines for oil and gas, stretching nearly 2500 km through difficult terrain. Yunan, which is far away from China's east coast, where much of the oil and gas is discharged and is transported through road and pipeline networks, will benefit immensely from the project.¹²

These Chinese actions to win over Myanmar had multiple aims:

Firstly, to secure the Chinese periphery and enhance Chinese regional influence. Secondly, to give China direct access to the Indian Ocean and reduced its dependence on tenuous sea routes to meet its energy requirements. Thirdly, to wean Myanmar away from India, the only other country that continued to maintain cordial relations with Myanmar despite the western embargo; and fourthly, it has used the Ka and Chin rebel areas of Myanmar to provide aid to Northeast Indian insurgent groups.¹³

Bangladesh

China's relations with Bangladesh were initially cool. Before 1971 China operated as patron of Pakistan, against whom Bangladesh had carved out its independence. Emerging as a Pro-India anti – Pakistan state, Bangladesh was on the opposite sides of the geopolitical fence to China.

However geopolitical and geo- economic forces have subsequently pulled China and Bangladesh close together. In political terms, the assassination of Sheikh Mujiber Rehman in 1975 brought on military and increasingly Islamist penetration of Bangladesh. In itself, particularly with regard to Islamist currents, such development did not endear this changing face of Bangladesh to China.

However, it did bring about a cooling of relations between Bangladesh and India, and some rapprochement between Pakistan and Bangladesh. In geopolitical terms, Bangladesh and China almost touch each other, separated only by the narrow Siliguri corridor, which serves as the equally narrow connecting bridge, the 'chicken's neck', between the main part of India and its north- eastern provinces. In geo economic terms, there has been the discovery of natural gas reserves in Bangladesh waters, amidst some territorial bickering by Bangladesh with India. If all these factors are put together, then it is not too surprising to have seen growing links between China and Bangladesh, an opportunity it [the People's Republic of

China] can scarcely afford to let go. In part, these emerging links are economic, with China replacing India as Bangladesh's largest trade partner in 2006.

China is particularly interested in greater access to Bangladesh's energy reserves, following agreements made in 1995, and in which some energy competition has been evident between India and China. In part, these emerging links are also political military, epitomized in the Bangladesh China Defense Co-operation agreement of 2002.¹⁴ Some reports indicate that China has become increasingly interested in the Bangladesh port of Chittagong and in constructing airfields in Bangladesh. China has offered Bangladesh (as well as Pakistan) nuclear power plants as well as low cost financial capital in an effort to improve relations. China appears to have its eye on Bangladesh's immense natural resources, including its huge natural gas reserves, estimated at 60 trillion cubic feet and rivaling those of Indonesia. Bangladesh's close proximity to Myanmar, a key Chinese ally, would make its gas reserves accessible to China. Bangladesh is also a doorway to India's troubled north eastern region, including the state of Arunachal Pradesh, where China has territorial claims. ¹⁵

Sri Lanka

The two and half decade's long ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka has resulted in the modernization of Sri Lanka's armed forces. China has emerged as major source of military equipment to Sri Lanka, ranging from armored vehicles, artillery guns and an assortment of personal weapons it has supplied a variety of heavy and medium guns and an assortment of personal weapons. Perhaps the largest military deal between China and Sri Lanka amounting to US\$ 37.6 million was signed in 2007. As part of the deal, China supplied F-7 fighter jets free of cost, artillery guns, armored personnel carriers (APCs) and infantry weapons. China has also provided and for the development of dual use infrastructure in Sri Lanka.¹⁶ The foundation for the construction of a modern port with Chinese assistance of Hambantota in southern Sri

Lanka was formally laid in October, 2007. The construction actually started in January, 2008. It is a 15 year project to be completed in stages. The entire project is estimated to cost US\$ one billion. The present Chinese commitment is for the construction of first stage only, which is estimated to cost US\$ 360 million. China has agreed to give 85 per cent of this amount at concessional interest. The balance is being contributed by the Government of Sri Lanka.¹⁷

The project envisages building oil and gas terminals, berths and port facilities and, like Gwardar, has the potential for dual use. In suitable circumstances, China can forward- deploy its naval and air force, stage rapid reaction forces, and build facilities for the repair and maintenance at Hambantota; it can also monitor US activity at Diego Garcia.¹⁸

Thus, from an Indian perspective, all these moves in India's neighbourhood seem to be aimed at ensuring the strategic encirclement of India.

China's Hydro Hegemony

Water security has become one of the greatest challenges of Asia in 21st Century. Today, water problems in Asia are severe one out of five persons (700 million) does not have access to safe drinking water and half of the region's population (1.8 billion) lacks access to basic sanitation. In the light of increasing scarcity of clean water and its rising demand, India and China sit at the pair headwaters of several of Asia's most important rivers. Although India has entered into water sharing treaties with Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh with whom it shares important trans boundary river systems, it doesn't have one with China which is the source country of the Yantze Mekong, Yalung- Tsangpro (which becomes the Brahmaputra in India and then goes to Bangladesh) Indus, Ravi, Irrawaddy, Sutlej and Salween River thereby exercising a degree of hydro – hegemony.

In recent years, the Chinese intention to build a series of dams over the Brahmaputra (Yarlung-Tsangpo) in Tibet is a matter of concern for India, and has rightly drawn reactions from various quarters. Until recently, China's strategy in the Himalaya region was exclusively focused on power relations with India and a defensive approach to the Tibet issue. With major plans like the Western China Development strategy and the West –East Electricity Transfer Project, the People's Republic of China aims to position Tibet as trading hub in the Himalayan region.

Under the opening up the West Campaign, the extractions of Tibet's natural resources are supposed to fuel the economic engines of eastern China, which in turn will pull background Tibet forward. Hailed as Xizang, the place of western treasure, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) untapped water resources remain an important objective for Chinese authorities to promote economic integration and stability. It is in this context that China's hydro- behavior in Yarlung- Tsangpo River must be seen.

Moving westward into the Tibetan hinterland, China has increasingly stressed the need to build hydroelectric programmers in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Currently less than 0.6 per cent of Tibet's hydropower resources have been developed in a region which produces approximately 200 GW of natural hydro energy annually which is about 30 per cent of China's total. The entire YarlungTsangpo River Basin was found to have hydropower potential of 114 GW, 79 GW of which was on the main river. China's main hydro project has been construction of the 510 MW Zangmu Hydropower Station, while four projects, LengdaZhongda, Langzhen and Jiacha have begun preparations and the middle reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpro.²¹

Earlier, the Chinese had persistently denied any dam construction actively on the Brahmaputra. It was only in April 2010 that Yang Jiechi, Chinese Foreign Minister, officially

acknowledged the construction of the Zangmu dam. Beijing gave an assurance that being a 'run of the river' project, it will not adversely impact the flow downstream. 22

Yet another ambitious project on the anvil is the South- North water Transfer Project (SNWTP). It entails augmenting the capacity of the Huang He and transfer of water to the deficit northern region. The project envisages diverting the waters of the Yangtze along three axial routes. The Eastern route diversion is aligned with the existing Grand Canal. It is designed to draw 14.8 BCM (billion cubic meters) annually from the Yangtze to the eastern plains. The Central Route project envisages diversion of 13 bcm from Nanjing River to Beijing – Tianjin region. In the Western Route diversion, three tributaries of the Yantze, namely Jinsha, Yalong and Dadu will be tapped to divert 17 billion cubic meters (BCM) of water through an elaborate tunnel network. These projects being confined to the Chinese mainland do not have external ramifications as such.

One project that will be of serious concern to India is the Great Western Route Water Transfer Project (GWRWTP). The proposed project is extension of the western route diversion scheme. It entails construction of mega dam at NamchaBarwa. Here, the Tsangpo River makes a steep loop to form a U-band before entering India. Initially the project is only for power generation with a proposed capacity of 38, 000 MW. Subsequently, plans are to divert water to the tune of 200 bcm annually to irrigate the deserts of Xinjiang, Gansu and Inner Mongolia. This Mammoth project could take decades to become operational. It will entail major tunneling efforts to the tune of 56 km, with longest tunnel envisaged to be 26 kilometers. The Chinese possess proven expertise in creating engineering marvels. In case this project is implemented, it will significantly impact the water flow in the Brahmaputra River.

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The hydropower plants on the Yarlung come at a time when other infrastructural development has taken place or will soon be completed. By 2012 the electricity grid in Tibet

will be connected to the national grid through Qinghai. The Qinghai Tibet railway has now made it possible to move materials for building large dams on the Yarlung. The Chinese now have a clear policy direction on the Yarlung and with energy supply becoming ever more pressure, the time and condition is ripe to develop the rich hydropower resources of Tibet along with a no-holds-bar approach to taking total and complete political control of Tibet.²⁴

China's Military Modernization

China has initiated a concerted military modernization programmed in the last few decades, the impact of which is being felt in the neighbourhood, including on India.²⁵ On nearly every front, the Chinese army has engaged in a spectrum of reforms aimed at making it a more professional force in a corporate and institutional sense, as well as a more operationally capable force. China perceives its security concerns in the context of her overall aim of becoming the dominant power in Asia, the main threats to the People's Republic of China's security has been led by a combination of traditional and non-traditional elements. This has resulted in the Chinese army undertaking a massive overhaul of the entire force structure, also bringing about personal reforms, reinvigorating, doctrinal thought, and yet another revitalization program for the defense research and development establishment.²⁶ Let us take a detailed look at the military's various components.

Modernization of the PLA ground Force

More visibly than all these measures was ten demobilization efforts, with the last three announced in 1985 (one million demobilization of troops), 1997 (half-a-million demobilization) and in 2003, having a lasting impact. In the 1985 efforts, the officer-to-soldiers ratio was lowered from 1:2.45 to 1:3.3, strength of technical personnel was increased and military academics were recognized. In the 1997 reorganization, ground forces strength was further reduced while navy; air force and rocket forces strength were enhanced, in

addition to creating a new armaments department. The first tri serve integrated services system was also formed. In the last reorganization in 2003, joint operations command institutions were formed and command structures were simplified.²⁷

After force reduction and modernization, China still boasts an army of 1.6 million, the largest in the world, with the bulk of it available in Chengdu and Lanzhou military regions, its ability to move to TAR (Tibet Autonomous region) and become operational in a rapid time frame is excellent. It has a rapid reaction corps with the ability to be deployed at short notice. In fact it was this corps that was activated when China was hit by floods in 2011.

While the initial impetus for modernization the ground forces was linked to a conventional war over Taiwan, gradually Chinese attention appears to have shifted to Tibet and Xinjiang, its two troublesome outlying regions. Of course, in the case of Tibet it also has in settled boundary issues with India. In 2009, China carried out a large scale military exercise Ex-Kuayul wherein formations from different regions were integrated into a single joint fire exercise at the field firing ranges. It was a clear signal to its neighbours – India, Vietnam and others of its capability to launch over land operations at short notice. ²⁸

Modernization of the PLA Air Force (PLAAF)

The PLAAF has gradually sifted from territorial air defense to both offensive and defensive operations. Accordingly, the modernization of the force is following a well-structured plan wherein the compact force structure is being transformed to focus on air strikes, air and missile defense and strategic projection; all built on information and networked support system.²⁹

In June 2004, at the Congress of the Chinese Communist Party, the PLA Leadership passed a resolution that the PLAAF would be upgraded to a strategic force. This would indicate

significant shift in PLAAF doctrine and operation planning. In addition to the acquisition of fourth generation aircraft, airborne warning and control system (AWACS), aerial refuelling, air defense systems, command, control, communication, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (C4ISR), modern missiles and anti-missiles weapons, electronic counter measures, information operation and Air Force automated command systems are being produced/ procured and integrated.

The PLAAF's capabilities have improved significantly over the past 10 years. China has adopted a two pronged strategy to upgrade its aircraft fleet. It is modifying its older generation aircraft and acquiring newer generation aircraft with transfer of technology in key areas. Except for the SU- 27s and SU-30s received from Russia, the domestically produced aircraft were not equipped with 'beyond visual range' (BVR) missiles. China's electronic warfare capabilities were minimal as well. This has therefore been an area of key focus for enhancing battlefield performance. The PLAAF now boasts of indigenously manufactured J-10 and J-11/11B aircraft as the mainstay of their 'Air Superiority Fighter' force and has been striving to achieve total self-sufficiency in air production by carrying out extensive tests on their indigenous WS/OA aircraft engine.³⁰

Modernization of the PLA Navy (PLAN)

In the past decade, the PLAN has been undertaking rapid modernization. The earlier Chinese thought process of Taiwan- centric operations underlined the requirement for a strong navy. Now that China perceived as a global power, the process of strengthening the PLAN has continued with Plans to acquire a blue water capability, to be followed by a subsequent push toward power projection. By 2020, it could have two to three carrier battle groups and 40-45 submarines (including adequate nuclear submarines) as well as surface ships. China

has implemented the 18 New Ship Programmes that introduced seven new domestically made third generation destroyers and eight new fighters. ³²

India's Counter Strategy

While India is aware to China's growing power and its potential impact on her national interests as well as the broader Asian strategic and security environment, so, it needs to examine whether India is prepared to meet all eventualities.³³ There is an inevitable geopolitical rivalry between India and China in the Indian Ocean, involving a competition for influence in countries such as Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.

China's concerns regarding the security of its seaborne energy imports from the Middle East/West Asia and Africa have complicated the situation. The notion of China's 'string of pearls' that has been discussed in connection with China's maritime strategy and foreign policy has a lot to do with US concerns about the growing Chinese influence in the 'high seas' off Asia. As pointed out earlier, the American notion of China's 'string of pearls' overlaps with the India's concerns over 'Chinese encirclement' which indicates that there is some communality in the American and Indian perceptions of China's maritime strategy and foreign policy.³⁴

The answer of China's so called 'string of pearls' around India is more diplomatic than military. It is time to wake up and extend hands of cooperation toward Myanmar, Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh and other Asian countries.³⁵ India needs reorientation of its foreign policy and expansion of its sphere of influence in the region.

It is important for India to challenge China's monopoly in the infrastructure development sector in the South Asian region. Presence in the infrastructure sector has a strategic

importance. We must be able to find the funds and required number of construction engineers for this.

Which are must exploit vigorously to increase its strategic presence in the region and to counter the Chinese presence.³⁶

- A. Firstly, India provides a huge market next door for the products of these countries. Their traders value the Indian market more than the Chinese market. We should be generous in our trade concessions in order to keep them attracted to India and prevent them drifting towards China.³⁷
- B. Secondly, India could play an important role in helping these countries develop to their educational facilities such as institutions for technology studies.
- C. Thirdly, culturally the people of these countries still look up to India and not to China. India's soft power has to be effectively utilized for strengthening out presence and influence in these countries. China is not in a position to complete with us in soft power.

Whether India should compete with China and selling arms and ammunition and nuclear technology to these countries has to be carefully considered keeping in view the implications of the likely use of Indian arms and ammunition by these countries against their dissident elements, which often look up to India for moral support.³⁸ As regards the supply of nuclear technology, India may not be in a position to provide the kind of financial back up that China provides.

India as the downstream riparian cannot legally question Chinese upstream projects. Varied interpretations of the use of river water have resulted in the differing claims of riparian countries. Upper riparian nations essentially base claims on 'absolute territorial sovereignty'

i.e., the right to use rivers unilaterally regardless of lower riparian concerns.³⁹ The lower riparian's, on the other hand, claims 'absolute territorial integrity' of rivers, stressing that upper riparian action should not affect the water flowing downstream.

Both the claim is extremely incompatible. There are however, accepted legal norms of equitable utilization' 'no harm' rule and 'restricted sovereignty' that riparian states work through, and frame negotiations and treaties accordingly to overcome such differing position. But more, often than not, these norms are rendered meaningless. It is almost a vague notion that nations are entitled to a 'reasonable share of water'. Given that there is no legal binding international treaty on water sharing, riparian relations will largely be influenced by prevailing political dynamics and strategic considerations.

However, dealing with a superior riparian player requires a fully thought out approach. China's hegemonic path is currently dominance by coercion. To counter balance China's hydro hegemony, it is critically important that are not reactive but perceptive. China is aware of its supreme riparian position, and it also frames it strategically. India, given its power parity, is the rightful counter balance in spite of its position as a lower riparian.

However, while India is a lower riparian country, it cannot legally question Chinese upstream projects.⁴⁰ But it important for India to draw China into a dialogue on water issue and consistently raise hydrological concerns at bilateral meetings.

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