

The Big Picture - India, China diplomatic ties

Anchor - Frank Rausan Pereira

Guests - Vishnu Prakash, Former Ambassador,

Maj. Gen. Dhruv C. Katoch, Retired Director, India Foundation,

Srikanth Kondapalli, Professor, Chinese Studies, Centre For East Asian Studies, JNU.

Larger Background:

- India and China will commemorate the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations in 2020 with 70 celebratory activities, including cultural, religious and trade promotion events besides military exchanges.
- The events were finalized in line with the understanding reached by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during their Second Informal Summit at Mamallapuram in October 2019.
 - The activities will include the two sides holding joint cultural performances at various border posts, visits of Indian naval ships as well as a mid-level tri-service delegation of the Indian armed forces to China.
 - Besides hosting parliamentary exchanges, the two countries will conduct various activities to trace civilizational links.
- On the business and trade front, China will hold a China-India Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum in India and organize the second China-India Drug Regulation. The first China-India Drug Regulation forum was held in China.

Sino- Indian ties at the moment:

- In the last 30 years, the relationship between the two countries has broadened, with the increase in people to people contact.
- The economic ties between the two countries have also increased.
- There are informal summits being hosted between the two countries to arrive at a middle ground on various issues. Informal summits are important as they allow the two countries to discuss and arrive at an understanding.
- The bilateral relationship between India and China is problematic, but the

celebrations and the informal summits will help both the countries to reach an understanding.

- The two countries meet 3-4 times a year, either at bilateral or multilateral forums.
- However, both the countries are unwilling to compromise on some core issues, for example, the Chinese activism on removal of 370 article, Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), negotiations on Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and territorial issues. These issues remain unresolved due to the exuberance of both the countries in their economic and military strength.
- China has consistently used Pakistan against India to confine India in South Asia, in order to realize its aim of being the only superpower by 2050. China is not comfortable with India's development and views it as a threat.

Importance of the 70th anniversary:

- The 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China will act as a cushion to the bilateral relations by bringing in soft elements like cultural aspects.
- India and China have agreed on ten pillars of cooperation to enhance cultural and people-to-people exchanges.
- These pillars are cultural exchanges, cooperation in films and television, museum administration and sports, exchanges between youths, cooperation in tourism, exchanges between states and cities, cooperation in traditional medicine, yoga and education.

China's expectations from India:

China expects an alliance from India and would want India to be a part of the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Collaborative Sino- Indian projects:

- China and India are collaborating on multiple projects, such as:
 - **Climate change-** [BRICS](#) have been advocating Common but differentiated responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) approach towards the issue of Climate change. It is a principle within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) that acknowledges the different

capabilities and differing responsibilities of individual countries in addressing climate change. Both the countries work together in BRICS.

- United Nations- India and China are a part of the UN and have to adhere to the UN Charter.
- Both the countries are a part of multilateral institutions, for example- Shanghai Cooperation Organization ([SCO](#)), and East Asian Summit.
- On the economic front, both countries work together in the World Trade Organization(WTO). Both India and China as a part of G77 countries, are strongly committed to the leadership in climate action.

Chinese economy and India- China ties:

- Trade War with the U.S. has severely impacted China's economy.
- China wanted India to join the the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), as that would have given the Chinese unfettered access to the Indian Market.
 - RCEP is a proposed free trade agreement in the Asia-Pacific region between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and their five FTA partners. India, ASEAN's sixth FTA partner, opted out of the agreement in 2019.
- China is being looked at differently due to the treatment of Uighurs in Xinjiang province.
 - The Uighur men are placed in concentration camps while the women are being used by the Han community. The Han community reasons these actions as the basis of providing better integration among the community.
 - The silence of the Muslim countries on the atrocity is quite surprising. The West, however, has taken this issue seriously.
 - This issue can, however, be a potential reason for problems between Pakistan and China in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) collaboration, for example:
 - The insurgency has increased in Balochistan.
 - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan also are not in a peaceful condition.
 - The entire route from Xinjiang to Gwadar is a picture of turmoil.

- China's biggest concern is the occurrences in the Indian Ocean. The quad (a cooperation between India, USA, Japan, and Australia) provides the potential to neutralize Chinese actions in the Indo-Pacific region.
- India's major concern with China lies in the country's strategic alliance with Pakistan.

Challenges:

- **Maintenance of the ties:** China follows a very assertive approach in which it remains in good ties as long as India doesn't oppose it. China can't expect India to always oblige to its demands. The relationship between both the countries needs an equal base.
- Experts are of the view that differences with China are not capable of resolution in the short-term or the middle-term. Especially with the issues concerning border disputes, either of the sides are not willing to compromise their position.
- **Unless there is a demarcated border, there are many things that cannot be done.** There are constant tensions of hostility and a measure of distress.
- **Resolving core issues:** core issues between the two countries haven't been resolved. For example, China's support to Pakistan on the issue of terrorism.
 - The resolution to the issue is being left for the future generation to tackle.
 - China should also stop using Pakistan against India to contain India's growth in Southern Asia.

Way Forward:

- The Summit at Mamallapuram has set the stage discussions. Efforts must be taken to develop core constituencies in both the countries to resolve the core issues.
- It is essential to maintain good relationship with China as we share a border of 4000 km with them.
 - This border is non-demarcated and offers a lot of potential for misunderstandings between the two countries.
 - In the backdrop of developments in the neighbourhood, involving China, such as the Hong Kong protests, issues in Tibet, Xinjiang province etc, India should not create another situation such as Doklam which may lead to further gaps in the relationship between both the countries.

- India would have to engage with China in order to narrow the divergences while keeping its guard up.
 - The positive developments in the bilateral relationships (Example: Wuhan Summit, Chennai connect etc) have also had a directly proportional effects on the incidents at the border.
- **Better people to people connection:** better understanding between the youth of both the countries, strategic community, and academia will help strengthen ties.
- **Bridging of Trade-Deficits:** The Chinese should bridge their trade deficits of 750 billion dollars in the last ten years if they don't want India to raise tariffs on Chinese products. This would mean that the Chinese would have to provide a level playing field to the Indian pharmaceuticals and software companies.
- **Cultural Connect:** The cultural connections between the two countries have to be strengthened.
 - The Tourism sector has to be worked on. The number of Indian tourists to China outranks the number of Chinese visitors to India by multiple folds.
 - Tourism would also enable people-to-people contact to increase. Indian tourism can promote the culture, educational aspects and spiritual visits, for example- the buddhist circuit to attract chinese tourists.
 - Buddhist Circuit refers to the buddhist pilgrim sites in India which include Bodhgaya, Vaishali and Rajgir in Bihar, Sarnath in Varanasi, Shravasti and Kushinagar in Uttar Pradesh.
 - Multiple-entry visa granted by India for 5 years is an attempt to increase the number of Chinese tourists to India.
- China should also undertake economic projects in India.
- Confidence Building Measures (CBM) in military field are an important component in conflict resolution process between the two countries.

Conclusion:

Core issues as far as India and China are concerned continue to remain, but there have been several positives since the Wuhan Spirit and Chennai connect, giving hope that the India- China relationship can progress in a positive direction.