

## **Cooperation without trust: India-China relations today**

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Debates about Sino-Indian relations often start off from either one of two different, and even contradictory, schools of thought.

The first of them takes a “realist” point of view, arguing that each of the two emerging powers would fight for dominance in the Asian continent. It tends to describe relations between the two countries as hostile. This could even lead to military confrontation between the two nations, or at least to an even greater militarization of the region (Roy 2011, Banyan 2012, The Economist 2012). War is only contained because both countries have nuclear weapons and are increasing and modernizing their capabilities in conventional warfare. India belongs to the group of major importers of military technology.

The second school of thought takes a liberal perspective, viewing China and India as two major emerging markets in a more and more interdependent world, where trade and commerce sustain peaceful co-existence. Observing the Indian media it seems that the “China threat” theory dominates in most news broadcasts (Banyan 2012).

This paper intends to review the current relationship between China and India and to analyse where India and China are cooperating, why they do so, and what is (and could) be done to improve relations between the two countries. It will also look at people-to-people interaction and new fields of cooperation in the civil society and the education sectors. Beyond the use of secondary sources about India-China relations, two Indian scholars of China were interviewed for this paper. They stand for two generations of the post-1962 era, illustrating gradual changes in India's perception of China.

The aim of this essay is to look beyond the general debate about India's relationship with China and show what kinds of cooperation already exist and how persistent they are. I also want to emphasize another important factor of Sino-Indian relations: the level of trust. There are many fields where India and China are cooperating, but there is not much progress especially in bilateral matters, as can be observed when looking at the way how both sides are handling the border issue. I argue that trust is an important variable for sustainable cooperation, and that trust, or rather the lack of it, is a determining factor in Indo-Chinese cooperation.

### ***From “Hindi-Chini bhai, bhai” to “Hindi-Chini bye, bye”***

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the new independent nation states Republic of India and the People's Republic of China (PRC) were founded. Both countries, but especially Nehruvian India, felt that they were vanguards of the anti-colonial movement. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru saw China as a natural ally, close to India, as both nation states had just fought off imperialism. The phrase “Hindi-Chini bhai, bhai!” (“India and China are brothers”) was coined during this era, in the light of the 1954 Panchsheel Agreement with the PRC.

While parts of the Indian public celebrated Chinese-Indian friendship, the Chinese public did not share the same excitement; it was probably not even aware of the Indian enthusiasm after Independence. After founding the PRC, the Communist Party of China (CPC) under Chairman Mao Zedong was busy to establish their one party rule. After winning the war against the Japanese and the Chinese Nationalist Party (Guomindang) the CPC's policies were predominantly inward looking. Mao Zedong tried to consolidate his power and his vision of communism in China, employing large political campaigns. The „Hundred Flowers“ and „Anti Rightist“ Campaigns of the 1950s were only the forerunners of the „Cultural Revolution“ that started in the mid-1960s and ended only with the fall of the „Gang of Four“ in 1976. Throughout this period, even while China supported a number of anti-colonial struggles in Asia and Africa and even ran into a border conflict with the “big socialist brother”, the Soviet Union, China's concerns about events outside its borders were limited.

The uncomplicated relationship with India changed abruptly in 1955, when the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) occupied the region which is today known as the *Tibet Autonomous Region*. All Chinese governments since the founding of the Republic of China in 1912 had claimed Tibet as an integral part of China. Although India under Nehru quickly acknowledged Tibet as a part of the PRC, the political situation changed for both sides, with painful consequences for India.

Nehru, believing an anti-imperialist brother with no bad intentions living next door, had rejected any strong militarization of India's eastern border. But the Indian Prime Minister did not know that parts of the Chinese communist leaders saw the Congress government in New Delhi as just national bourgeois successors of the British colonial government in India. The CPC leadership got more suspicious as the Indian officials insisted to leave the border demarcations as they had been drawn by the British government in India. The British-Indian government and the then independent Tibetan government had signed a border treaty in 1914 (Simla Accord) without the consent of the then Republic of China (ROC). The borderline separating Tibet from India known as “MacMahon Line” was recognized neither by the

ROC nor by its successor. Thus, the border issue was never solved between the now sovereign nations. This resulted in a short but fiercely fought war in 1962.

After its humiliating defeat, India increased its military presence in the regions bordering with China heavily. According to Srikanth Kondapalli, China expert from the Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, China has all together about 400,000 troops in the Lanzhou and Chengdu military regions (with Lanzhou being responsible for the areas bordering the Central Asian Republics, Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Aksai Chin, while Chengdu relates to the borders with Vietnam, Myanmar, Bhutan, Nepal and the Line of Actual Control with India). But the threats from Russia and the Central Asian republics have much decreased since the fall of the Soviet regime, while Afghanistan and Pakistan pose no real challenge for China. Prof. Kondapalli concludes that the large number of troops stationed in these regions result from perceived threats from terrorism and to counter a Indian threat. On the Indian side, approximately 200,000 to 220,000 troops are stationed in the regions bordering China. Although after a visit of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to Beijing relations started to get better in the late 1980s, the second nuclear test conducted by India in 1998 and the subsequent martial rhetoric of parts of the National Democratic Alliance government towards China, soured the Sino- Indian ties again.

India perceives China as a security threat because disputes about the demarcation of the border lines are still not solved. Occasional crossings of the Line of Control to India territory (LOC) by alleged Chinese soldiers and the “stapled visa affair” concerning citizens of the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Kashmir (Mohan 2011) pour oil into the fire that keeps the “Chinese threat theory” hot and boiling. The recent test of India’s Agni V long-range missile is also a part of India’s strategy to contain China militarily from a greater presence in South Asia. With Agni V, India's indigenous Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBM), India has the capacity to attack any of China's strategic cities and regions with a nuclear bomb. The nuclear threat is one of the reasons, a realist would say, that hinders both countries to aggressively solve the border issue. It is also a deterrent ensuring, as yet, that the competition for dominance in some Asian regions did not evolve into an armed conflict.

China has strong engagements with India’s neighbours that mostly don’t have really friendly ties with India. In the forefront is Pakistan. China assists India's western neighbour with building roads and power plants in Pakistan's Kashmir Region; India fears that China strengthens Pakistan’s military and Pakistan-supported anti-Indian militant groups in the region. Myanmar is another very contested territory among India and China. Over the years, the PRC supported the Burmese military junta, politically in the UN Security Council, and strategically by selling them weapons and securing access to offshore natural gas reserves. Although India is trailing China, it started to invest massively in Myanmar, especially after the

military junta started implementing democratic reforms in the country. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Myanmar in May 2012 and signed twelve agreements with Burmese President Thein Sein. They include agreements about border area development, air services, cultural exchange, a \$ 500 million credit line between India's Export-Import Bank and Myanmar Foreign Trade bank and establishing of a joint trade and investment forum. Since December 2006, in association with a Singaporean company, Silver Wave Energy, Gail India Ltd. signed a deal allowing the company to begin drilling for offshore oil. By 2016 a "Super-Highway" between India and Myanmar will be completed. Its aim is to create a new economic zone linking Northeast India, Myanmar, Thailand and eventually Cambodia and Vietnam. This will not only benefit India's Northeast which is in the desperate need of economic development, but this economic zone will also bypass China and foster India's access to oil and gas reserves in Myanmar and the rest of Southeast Asia (Nelson 2012).

China is also helping Sri Lanka to build a naval port. Although China assures that it will not be used for the presence of Chinese war ships in the region, India worries what will happen. The strategy China follows with the establishment of different ports and military bases from the Island of Hainan in the South Chinese Sea to the Persian Gulf in the Middle East is called "String of Pearls". This "[String of Pearls](#)" should secure China's energy supply and trade routes. India sees this strategy as interfering in India's own backyard. At the same time India increases also its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and in the Persian Gulf. India traditionally has a good relationship with Iran. The South Asian nation is helping Iran to expand the port of Chabahar, South Iran, near the Iran-Pakistan Border (Bedi 2012). India also established naval presence in the Seychelles and Mauritius, and surveillance posts in Madagascar and in the Antarctic. Officially India strengthens its naval presence to secure the sea route for trading ships in the Indian Ocean Region. But experts are convinced that India also wants to counterbalance the increasing influence of China in the region (Simpson and Nelson 2011). Additionally India's fears are accentuated by statements by a Chinese admiral, quoted in the Indian press: "You, the United States, take Hawaii East and we, China, will take Hawaii West and the Indian Ocean. Then you will not need to come to the western Pacific and the Indian Ocean and we will not need to go to the Eastern Pacific. If anything happens there, you can let us know and if something happens here, we will let you know." (Sakhuja 2009)

These examples show that China and India are both competing for a greater economic and political influence in Asia.

With an increasing military build-up and a sometimes chauvinistic rhetoric in both nations, the risk of a military conflict seems to be real. But the situation is not that simple or one-sided.

Both countries are experiencing high economic growth in the last two, three decades. The liberal view of relations between India and China expects a peaceful rise of both Asian giants with both countries interlinked to each other with strong economic bonds and also with the same social, environmental and security threats which will force them to eventually work together. Cooperation is the only rationale that both countries can choose for their mutual benefit.

***„Hindi-Chini buy, buy“: The idea of “Chindia”***

The main argument of the liberal view is the importance of economic ties for both countries. In this perspective, the global interconnection between national economies should result in greater peaceful cooperation between great powers like India, China and Russia, rather than hostilities. Growing consumer classes in India and China want to consume high quality goods for affordable prices in a secure environment; insecurity and war is not an option for them. And if there are conflicts they will be solved peacefully because securing the prosperity of the nation and its citizens through peaceful means should be the main objective of the state: “Rising trade has itself contributed to an easing of the border issues. China’s recognition of Sikkim as part of India enabled a 2004 agreement to open the Nathula and Jelepale Passes in Sikkim as trading links. Closed since 1962, in July 2006 the Nathula Pass finally reopened. However, trade through the pass, once the route for 80% of bilateral trade, has been limited, primarily benefiting areas in close proximity to the pass. It consists mainly of small-scale exchanges of consumer goods such as traditional woollen products and pirate DVDs. In the 51 days of trading in 2006, trade totalled US\$186,250. While the opening of the pass has been broadly interpreted as a goodwill gesture, there is still mutual mistrust. Both sides have placed restrictions on items that can be traded across the pass. India has limited Chinese imports to a list of 15 items, including silks and goat and yak products, while China has allowed imports of 29 items, including tea, spices, dyes, blankets and farm implements. The Indian government is exploring what other items could be traded via this route.” (Price 2007:6)

China already has emerged as one of the largest trading partners of India. In 2010, the bilateral trade stood at \$61.74 billion, which is expected to touch the \$100 billion-mark by 2015 ([www.indianexpress.com](http://www.indianexpress.com) 2011). But the trade comes with a frustrating deficit for India: "India's trade deficit with China jumped 42% to nearly \$40 billion in the last fiscal year ended March 31, and was the largest contributor to the country's overall gap between exports and imports." (Sharma 2012). India has difficulties to sell Indian made products in China, while Chinese goods – from ladies cosmetics and portraits of Hindu deities to sophisticated telecommunication hardware – are flooding the Indian market. India wants to reduce the dominance of primary products and raw materials, like iron ore, in India's

export basket by including manufactured goods therein. The South Asian country is especially keen to dismantle the barriers for cooperation in information technology, education, the financial sector, healthcare and tourism (Acharya 2006:4934 #13, Sharma 2012).

For India it is very important to solve these issues with China because the trade deficit is a factor in the depreciation of the Indian Rupee's value. It has also put enormous pressure on India to attract foreign investment. But India cannot alone blame China for its problems. In fact, the trade imbalance shows that India's manufacturing infrastructure is still weak and that Indian manufacturers are not capable to produce high quality goods which consumers like to buy, like their Chinese counterparts. Indian firms are pressuring the government in New Delhi to protect them from Chinese dumping prices. But this policy might backfire and hurt the economy as well as the Indian consumer. For example, at the end of July 2012 the cabinet approved a 21% tariff on imports of equipment for big power projects, a move aimed to protect local manufacturers from Chinese competitors. But India desperately needs to boost power production, as the massive power outage at the end of July 2012 has demonstrated. Advanced Chinese technology – from boilers to turbines – is becoming increasingly vital to pull off the biggest power plant projects. China already supplies over 40% of India's power gear. (Sharma 2012)

The pros and cons of a stronger Chinese engagement in the Indian market is a matter that the Indian government and the Indian public have to evaluate themselves. The U.S., Brazil, and Russia run large trade deficits with China, too. But India's concerns are especially sensitive, given the countries are neighbouring rivals with clashing strategic interests. Besides the border dispute along the Himalayas, India is increasingly worried about China's influence over Indian Ocean shipping lanes, while China is wary of India's oil-exploration in the South China Sea.

Economic stability and profit are the main motives for China and India to work together. Both countries "signed a draft bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement (BIPA) during President Hu Jintao's visit to India in November 2006. The agreement was one of thirteen trade pacts signed between India and China during the official visit and provides an institutional and legal framework for increased foreign investment flows between the two sides. India and China also agreed to encourage cooperation in oilfield bidding and exploration and the development of hydrocarbons in third countries." (Price 2007:5) In Sudan for example both countries work together. India drills the oil and China provides the infrastructure by building the pipe lines. This is one of the few examples where "Chindia" happens. The term "Chindia" was coined by Jairam Ramesh, a renowned politician and MP from the Indian National Congress. His expectation is that if India and China join together they would resolve global challenges, such as climate change or energy issues. They are both two of the biggest oil consumers. If they work

together they could put great pressure on the oil producing countries. And if both get together they could also put more pressure on the G7 states. This is the basic concept of “Chindia” or of mutual cooperation. In the business world the term is often used for the possible synergies in the IT sector or business in general, where China produces the hardware (manufacturing) and India provides the software (service). Some Indian software companies like Satyam and Wipro have already set up shop in China. But even here the “trust factor” hinders greater collaboration. India fears that China wants to challenge its position of a global software exporter and China fears India could become a major manufacturing hub. (Price 2007:5)

Nevertheless, even though the idea of dividing software and hardware production between the two Asian giants seems to be an attractive idea, in the long run this would play out as a disadvantage for India because the service sector alone cannot provide the jobs required for the growing Indian work force. Only a labour-intensive mass production can incorporate the growing numbers of employable young Indians in the future.

### ***Multilateral engagement with mistrust***

Bilateral relations between India and China after the war in 1962 have been ambivalent. The same can be said about the relationship of both countries in multilateral forums.

China and India often join forces when it comes to oppose demands from western, developed countries. In climate policy, China and India signed a five year agreement in October 2009 to jointly fight climate change and to negotiate international climate deals using common positions. This agreement was made prior to the UN climate change summit in Copenhagen in December 2009. China and India together, both members of G20, consistently argue that developing countries should not be required to set and meet the same targets for reducing greenhouse gases as developed countries who carry a greater historical responsibility for the increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases. The BASIC nations (Brasil, South Afric, India and China) jointly opposed a proposal made at the Copenhagen Summit requiring developing countries, including India and China, to not increase their Greenhouse gas emissions after 2025. This was unacceptable for China and India, as they saw this as an attempt by Western powers to undermine their fast economic development. The BASIC countries prepared their counter-draft well in advance of the Summit, and India and China’s cohesion on climate change remained throughout the Copenhagen Summit. They rejected calls by developed nations to set legally binding targets, and both countries signed a modified Copenhagen Accord afterward in March 2010.

On the economic arena China and India together did not consent to a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) yet because of fears of the Indian industry that it would not be able to compete with cheap Chinese imports. Nonetheless, an indirect arrangement came into effect in 2010, when an India-ASEAN FTA and a China-ASEAN FTA was signed, respectively. But again, the Indian media and industry is concerned that China can import cheap goods through the China-ASEAN FTA, thus affecting Indian exports to China negatively.

China and India also joined hands in the World Trade Organization (WTO). At the Doha Development Agenda (DDA) trade talks in Geneva 2008 the main cleavage was again between the developed countries led by the US and the EU, and BASIC. After years of negotiation, and after almost reaching an agreement, talks broke down after the USA refused to discuss “special safeguard agreements” in agriculture as India has requested. China backed India's stand. Although this mutual support drew widespread criticism from not only developed countries but also from Brazil, the joint position of the two neighbouring countries has continued ever since. (Whalley and Shekhar Tanmaya 2010:20-23 #24)

While in multilateral forums, both Asian giants obviously share a geo-strategic interest, the seemingly strong solidarity between India and China vanishes when it comes to what both assume to be their own respective backyards. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a group of Central Asian Countries, Russia and China dominated by the latter two nation states, while the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is a regional forum dominated by India. China and India tried to keep each other out of their respective denominations to contain greater regional influence by the other. But pressure from the other countries within the SAARC and SCO who have friendlier ties with the respective regional power eventually gave India SCO observer status in 2005 and as part of the deal China also became an observer in the SAARC. (Singh 2011:7- 10 #23)

One can argue that for India, as the economically and politically weaker party of the China-India power struggle, multilateral engagement can be a good tool to contain China's dominance outside the areas of India's interests. Pakistan follows a similar strategy against its stronger foe India by trying to internationalize the Kashmir issue while India tries to argue that Kashmir is solely an internal or at the most bilateral issue.

But still, understanding in the multilateral field has not improved bilateral relations: “We cooperate in the multilateral, but we don’t cooperate in the bilateral” is the Indian- Chinese credo. China expert Prof. Kondapalli condemns this doctrine strongly: “It basically means that there is some reluctance to cooperate. The result is that we have not seen the crucial bilateral problems being resolved. We don’t

know where our border is, we only have a fuzzy idea and a claim. We don't have an agreement; we do not know an officially sanctioned border. [...] There are also security concerns of India about the transfer of nuclear intelligence to Pakistan by China as China is helping to construct two nuclear power plants in Pakistan. This kind of activities makes India suspicious. So we see, that the multilateral cooperation has not impacted the bilateral relations. With the result that there is mutual distrust. So 'Chindia' is working only in some areas. We have 'Chindia' in A, B,C, D but not in X,Y, Z."

### ***China-India Relations: Lack of scholars and people who can understand the other side***

For building up trust, understanding and knowledge is very important – in everyday life as in international relations. As regards China, India's knowledge about the neighbouring country and one of the great powers of the current world order is appallingly low, as shown by the small number of scholars and experts on China. Prof. Prof. Kondapalli estimates that the number of Chinese experts in India does not surpass the number of 100: "It is quite shameful that very few Indians focus on China. For 1.1 billion people looking at 1.4 billion People, we are actually understaffed to understand the other side." Not all of the experts are able to speak and write Chinese. Most of them have their academic background from other fields, such as American or Russian Studies, and shifted their expertise to China later on, after China moved more into the global spotlight. The main sources of information for them are the English edition of the state-run Xinhua News Agency, the Foreign Broadcast Information Service or the BBC. For a country like India which has unresolved border issues with China and went to war because of this in 1962, the lack of capacity to deal with China is astonishing.

It remains difficult to understand why a hostile conflict in the past and greater business interests nowadays have not more increased the demand for people who can understand the other side. Prof. Kondapalli assumes that one reason could be that after the 1962 war it was difficult for Indian researchers to do field research in China as the Chinese government didn't hand out visas to Indian citizens. Kondapalli's teacher, for example, passed away in 1993 without ever having been to China. When he went to the Chinese embassy in New Delhi to apply for a visa, the Chinese Officials looked at his PhD proposal, which was about the "Anti-Rightist campaign", and declined. A generation of scholars could not enter China because of a Cold War between India and the PRC between 1962 and 1991. In 1991 the governments of both countries signed a Cultural Exchange Program. As part of this agreement every year 28 Indian students were invited to China and 28 Chinese students were send to India. Students could be from any subject and could attend any university. Prof. Kondapalli's generation was

the first who benefited from this program. With a fellowship by the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Prof. Kondapalli went to China to learn Chinese in 1996. Before that, he already had been once in China in 1994 to do his field research at the famous former Communist headquarter in Yan'an, Shaanxi Province. What happens when you learn a language and start to understand the other side is best described in Prof. Kondapallis own words: "After one year of language training, we were charged up and kind of unleashed into the Chinese society. And it was amazing. The previous visit in 1994, I was not really confident, because I couldn't communicate with everybody. But after the 1996 to 1997 language training you are kind of charged up, you can jump around and you can talk to people." This new quality of understanding helps to overcome cultural or even political differences as another incidence in Prof. Kondapallis time as a researcher in Yan'an shows: "On the particularity of being an Indian, I had not so many incidents. But an interesting story happened when I was researching in Yan'an. I generally had my food in a restaurant outside the city. One day the hotel owner asked me where I was from. As I answered that I was from India, he told me that he participated in the 1962 war. So, he showed me some guns he owned from that time. That was my first incident where I met somebody from China with a connection to the 1962 war. But, he did not do that to offend me, he just wanted to show that he had some link to India. After we have talked, he cooked dog meat for me, as a special treat. So, I couldn't decline. That was the first time I ever ate dog, and probably the last time (laughing)."

### ***Changing prospects: Building up trust and learning from the other side***

Ms Bhavna Singh, research officer at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS ) and a PhD candidate in a China Studies Program at JNU, is part of a the newest generation of Indian scholars who went to China in 2008 as part of the exchange program. She might represent a changing attitude among the public and scholars towards China – an attitude more open minded and less affected by the Indian experience of defeat in the 1962 war. The post-1991 liberalization generation of Indians is driven more by practical economic interests and, for those who can afford it economically, by a growing curiosity for deepening knowledge about other cultures and countries. China is emerging as an affordable and popular place for aspiring India doctors. Since 2008 60 to 100 Indian students are placed in Chinese medical colleges each year in order to pursue their MBBS, and the numbers will grow further (Bhattacharyya 2012).

In 2011 Ms Bhavna Singh was part of a delegation of scholars and NGO members who went to China to explore the situation of NGOs in the PRC. The delegation consisted of women leaders like Jyotsna Chatterji, environmentalist like Avanti Metha, journalists and political leaders. The host of this program

was the China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CINIE) which is an umbrella organization of 45 Chinese NGOs and 26 individual council members.

Ms Bhavna Singh and the Indian delegation, as representatives of education, politics and NGOs from a democratic country with civic liberties, realized that there is much to learn from the Chinese government-organized NGOs. First of all, in her view, the manner of operation is superior compared to India. The Chinese get a lot of funding from governmental and non-governmental sources. In that sense they have a lot of capacity. But it is not only the money. At the implementation level, even though India also has a quite a lot of capacity, India's organizations perform very weakly compared to China. That might not only be because of the bureaucratic hurdles faced by Indian NGOs. Indian NGOs are most of the times totally independent from government and business bodies. If an organization wants to implement an agenda it has to follow a sometimes frustrating process of consensus building with different political, business and social interest groups. In China, the organisational and management structure is different. The functionaries of CINIE and its sister organizations are often connected to the CCP or government bodies. In China, consensus does not emerge as a process of conflict resolution from the bottom, but instead is reached by following the guidelines of the party or government policies. That's why in China, the agenda of NGOs is most of the times already conform with government policies, so that the process of implementation doesn't meet many obstacles.

CINIE shows also increasing interest to cooperate with Indian NGOs, especially on environmental issues. They have already put forward a request to government officials to start such cooperation. But there is a structural problem the Chinese have to face if they want to make such initiatives work: In India, there is no single umbrella organization like CINIE they can get in touch with in the first place. So they have to go to every NGO individually and ask for some kind of cooperation. In that sense it will become a little more difficult for them, because their way of conduct is more organized, more streamlined, more disciplined, and in that sense not so complicated as in India. This is also a learning process for Chinese organizations which have to deal with more democratic, liberal and hence "chaotic" structures.

The process to look for cooperation with Indian NGOs has just started. The Chinese side plans to send a delegation every year to filter out individuals who might help them to start interacting with Indian NGOs. Avanti Metha for instance, an environmentalist who works alternatively in Mumbai and Delhi and was part of the Indian delegation in China, is involved in a lot of environment based issues and various agencies. The Chinese expect her to assist them to create networks with Indian environmental organizations and also to support them to promote their agenda to Indian government bodies and NGOs.

“That's how we individuals are becoming a further link for the Chinese to connect with Indian voluntary organizations”, adds Ms Bhavna Singh.

But the motivation for partnering with Indian NGOs is much bigger on the Chinese than on the Indian side, a result of the general strains in the bilateral relationship which also affects civil society actors on both sides. Ms Bhavna Singh assumes that because of the lack of mutual trust in the political sphere the two neighbouring countries also do not go comfortably with each other in other fields. The language problem is certainly one factor because a lot of nuances are lost in translation. That makes working together difficult because very often both sides end up not to include the things they originally wanted to include in their agenda. On the official level it is also difficult to get clearances from both sides. If Indians invite a group from China this will mostly be organized through the government body called “India-China Economic Council” (ICEC). It was through ICEC that the Indian NGOs invited the CINIE delegation. But even if the Chinese want to be the first to fund projects in India, they will be met with a lot of distrust. People would ask why a particular Chinese organization wants to invest or fund somebody in India.

In Ms Bhavna Singh's opinion China's area studies programs on South Asia and India are far more advanced than India's China programs. There is a qualitative difference for somebody who wants to pursue Indian Studies in China: almost all important Indian classical works are translated into Chinese while Chinese classics are seldom available for students in India, neither in Indian languages nor even in English (as imported books are very expensive). The Chinese on the other hand have some experts in the Sanskrit language, and even a few experts in South Indian languages. Their interest has most of the times to do with Buddhist scriptures which had an impact on the traditional Chinese society. So, almost all classical Buddhist scripture are already translated into modern Chinese.

### ***India needs a new approach towards China***

The call for a new strategy or approach towards China is not a new one (Banerjee 2010:2-4 #27). But India needs to react now to foster peaceful relations on an equal basis with China. The educational and the economic sector are paving the way for better relations. With the growing capacity in university exchange programs and business relations also personal relationships can grow. On a personal, individual level trust between the two countries is growing. India's main problem in improving relations to China is partly due to the lack of political will from the government to change the status quo with China, due to vested interests from different political groups, industry and probably military. But it is partially also due

to the current state of political and civic culture in India. Most importantly, the media in India show a tendency to exaggerate and monger for sensations. The way popular Indian TV News Channels present news, as well as the discussion culture in talk shows, do not help to create a culture of common courtesy and trust or simply inform the public. In the case of China, media show a bias against China most of the time, looking at the neighbouring country primarily as a threat to India's sovereignty. This argumentation is certainly not completely wrong; India has to keep a watchful eye on China because the border conflict is still pending and Chinese military power and influence in India's geo-strategic territory is increasing. China's relationship with Pakistan is definitely an effort to counter India's growing geo-political ambitions. But a comparison between Indian relationships to Pakistan and those to China shows that the chances for positive change are much higher with China. Since the war 1962 and the border clashes in Sikkim 1967 not a single shot was fired between India and China. At the Indo-Pakistan border there is frequent exchange of artillery fire, terrorists are sneaking in, and then there is border trespassing by military jets and personnel. Additionally the element of ideology is much stronger in relation with Pakistan than with China. Part of Pakistan's military and probably national identity is "Anti-Indianism". Such an element is totally missing in the relations with China. China is a far more rational competitor and therefore much easier to deal with than Pakistan. Only India sometime seems to act irrational when it comes to China.

India has to cast off its inferiority complex when it has to face China. The country seems to have forgotten its old strengths when it comes to its authoritarian neighbour. In direct comparison, the South Asian country lags far behind the PRC in almost all socio-economic index figures. Even at sport events like the Olympics India is far behind the PRC on the medal tally. Western and even Indian experts are quick to blame the slow democratic process for India's situation. In the 1990s and in the first decade of the second millennium, when India's economic growth was on the fast track, experts did not spare with praises on India's democratic system and rule of law. But in the economic slowdown that started in 2011, experts again point their fingers at India's heterogeneous, democratic society. A German observer captures the ambivalence: "Personally, one refuses to make this kind of assessment: But it seems though that the democratic process is a hindrance for India's development. However, one has to keep in mind that India's political system is characterized by an enormous complexity due to the diversity of regions, people and opportunities. In this case blockades, idleness and corruption are somehow inevitable. Then there are the enormous social challenges, which very difficult to handle even with the best intentions and the most effective instruments." (Müller 2012).

One may argue that this kind of assessment is again an oversimplification of the problem: How can a system that for almost two decades seemed to be an engine of growth, now be a hindrance for development? Many experts forget to evaluate the historic genesis of a system and the probable future consequences for it. The Chinese model of development evolved after decades of social and economic turmoil. India's development was quite stable without major political system changes. In contrast, China had the Mao era, the Cultural Revolution, post-Cultural Revolution and post-Tian'anmen. The transitions to these different phases in modern PRC history were accompanied by major social and political unrest. India's federal democratic system, with all its flaws, proved to be a better management tool to deal with social movements and turbulences until now. Independent India's economic performance till the 1990s, although with a low growth rate, was constant and predictable, while Chinese political and economic situation was unstable, the social situation even at times explosive.

Many would argue that India's current weak economic performance is not a systemic issue, but constitutes a leadership and governance leadership problem. In a TV news panel about India's 65<sup>th</sup> Independence Day anniversary, a panellist said that India lacks the leaders it had during the freedom struggle and shortly after independence. This referred not only to the realm of politics, but also to culture and sports where India was leading Asian nations in the 1950s and 1960s. After this era a new breed of leaders emerged who had not been directly involved any more in the freedom struggle and had different values. I do not say that all these new values were bad but some of them definitely have an effect on the current state of politics in India. If India can rediscover its old strength and identity, it can face China with self-confidence again – not aggressively, but on par with the other Asian giant.

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