



## 中印關係：莫迪效應

### China-India Relations: The Modi Effect

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■ **摘要** ■ 印度總理莫迪 (Narendra Modi) 在外交政策上展現強烈的個人風格更甚於推動制度性合作關係的建立。以中 - 印關係為例，莫迪於 2018 年 4 月與中國國家主席習近平於武漢進行非正式會議，試圖凸顯個人魅力相較制度性的外交管道更能取得外交成果；但事實上，莫迪與習近平的私人情誼至今尚未轉換成具體的外交成果。在邊界、貿易、及西藏等問題，中印皆未有顯著的突破。本文分析影響中印互動的 7 大因素，並指出印度各政黨應參考德國政黨培養智庫人才，藉以強化政策制定的專業性。

■ **Abstract** ■ India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has imprinted his initiatives by emphasising the 'individual' over other aspects such as institutions that are the framework of a state's foreign policy. It is an endeavour to create a presidential approach to foreign policy where an individual halo is projected over the nation's external objectives. Modi's visit to Wuhan, China where he had an informal summit with Xi Jinping demonstrates that such an approach to foreign policy generally fails to make a significant breakthrough on disputed issues. This article will later address 7 influential factors to India-China relations, and suggests that Indian political parties imbibe the example of Germany where leading political parties have think tanks explicating on all issues facing the country including foreign policy.

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India's Prime Minister, Narendra Modi met President Xi Jinping of China on 27-28 April 2018. They held an informal summit at Wuhan where 'all outstanding' issues were discussed. The discussions on 'all outstanding' issues focussed on the unresolved boundary dispute where the 4056 kms disputed boundary, called the Line of Actual Control (LAC) was central to their deliberations. The constantly ballooning trade deficit India has with China - a statistical figure going up every year - and issues pertaining to enhancing cultural aspects to deepen the bilateral were issues discussed. Whether the issue of Tibet figured in their informal discussions is not known.

A question that keeps arising is: *why are China-India relations in stasis?* This brief essay tries to unravel a few aspects of the bilateral that have kept the neighbours distant, aloof and cautious.

## **The Modi Effect**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has imprinted his initiatives by emphasising the 'individual' over other aspects such as institutions that are the framework of a state's foreign policy. It is an endeavour to create a presidential approach to foreign policy where an individual halo is projected over the nation's external objectives, if any! His 'successes' in the realm of foreign policy have been a constant reiteration of style over substance catering to a domestic audience largely inured about matters related to foreign policy. This apparent coolness to foreign policy stems from all politics in India being domestic with matters related to foreign policy being a side show when salient issues like terrorism emanating from Pakistan motivate and guide the objectives of India's foreign policy. The election manifestos in 2014 of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) are indicative of where foreign policy is in the country's list of priorities. The manifestos of both groupings, before the general elections in April-May this year refer to foreign policy in generic terms. India being the world's largest democracy has many aspects laudable, yet, the hesitancy of its media to critically examine excesses of the current government on various issues is worth reflecting upon.

On foreign policy since mid-2014, the emphasis has been on projecting the image of a personality over national interests. Displaying decision making where an individual's decision prevails over that of institutions has been the hallmark of Modi's tenure as the prime minister. It would appear that foreign policy decision making currently is playing to a domestic audience without any feedback from wider society. The policy towards

China reflects this aspect since ‘1962’, the year when China and India fought a war where the loss still annoys India. That year in the China-India bilateral is akin to Macbeth’s ‘ghost at the banquet’! With Modi as prime minister, the articulation of an individual point of view sidesteps servitors of the foreign policy establishment known for their experience and understanding international norms and procedures. Diplomacy is a process of lengthy negotiations on many aspects with an objective where all sides claim to benefit from whatever covenant emerges or not.

For long, Indian foreign policy was the expression of Jawaharlal Nehru’s staying away from bloc rivalries of the Cold War and expressed through forums like the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). It bears mention here that the implosion of the former Soviet Union hastened the evolution of NAM as being little more than a talking shop!

Prime Minister Modi’s Wuhan informal summit with Xi Jinping did establish a personal connect between the two. This connect though, has yet to translate into cosier bilateral relations. In economic terms, India’s trade deficit with China has been increasing year after year. In 2018, India’s trade deficit was USD 61.94 billion, an unsustainable figure if trade deficit increases further. The commodities India exports to China reveals a lack of diversity. India exports petroleum products, gems and jewellery and agricultural products including rice to China. In return, China exports machinery, iron and steel, apparel, toys and games, furniture etc. all of which reveal the lop sided nature of bilateral trade with China increasing its surplus every year. China’s waffling and repeated objections on terrorism emanating from Pakistan is a case in itself, and a powerful variable where ‘strategic’ over the ‘economic’ matters to China.

The Doklam episode on the LAC was troubling as it follows Chumar and future episodes cannot be ruled out. Do these episodes reflect other aspects? Yes, they do. In India’s case, the lack of a coherent foreign policy has witnessed an episodic spurt of activity when high level bilateral visits and speeches are made at multilateral fora. China’s ‘One Road One Belt’ (OBOR) and ‘Maritime Silk Road Initiative’ (MSRI) have left Indian foreign policy practitioners and think tank analysts floundering. India’s hesitancy in participating in Chinese led initiatives are reflective of a lack of foreign policy options and the means to project alternative arrangements especially when China is enforcing its economic diplomacy through a new framework where there a security dimension inherent in ostensibly economic ventures.

China’s billions of dollars of investments in South Asia have left an imprimatur where the failure of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) comes on

top. By allowing this multilateral initiative to be held hostage to the fractious wrangling between India and Pakistan has given space to China (an observer in SAARC), creating economic incentives to other member countries of the region as a prelude to eventual strategic gains that follow. The manner in which India prevented essentials from reaching Nepal and imposed a blockade owing to the Madhesi issue, led to that country looking north for succour. If this reveals the lack of coherent foreign policy could we assume that India's foreign policy reflects domestic political shenanigans subordinating the very mechanisms of foreign policy and its institutions?

Prime Minister Modi's personal connect with Xi Jinping notwithstanding, the boundary dispute between the two countries is no closer to a resolution. Ajit Doval as the National Security Advisor and Special Representative to the boundary talks has strived to find a solution to the long standing boundary dispute, to no avail. The prime reason for the dispute finding no resolution is the temperament of the establishment to not entertain any domestic debate on finding hypothetical solutions from think tankers and universities where experts on international relations especially China and the manner in which it has settled boundary disputes with most of its neighbours offers several templates which are workable.

## **The China-India bilateral**

Do domestic politics play a role in the non-resolution of the boundary dispute? Yes, they do. There is no dearth of academic papers on boundary disputes being settled after a long duration. A final solution to a boundary dispute involves rational decision making divorced from domestic considerations. Being the world's largest democracy, in India, any hypothetical solution to the boundary dispute will lead to pandemonium in parliament. Local grievances also play a role in leading to law and order facing challenges, should the boundary dispute between the two countries find a solution. An aspect worth introspection is that boundary disputes are issues that democracies find difficult to settle. In Asia, Japan is the other democracy with unresolved maritime disputes, while India's is territorial.

Pithily put, Asia's largest countries, China and India, share a complicated relationship. As nations with a sense of historical destiny reflected in their civilizational spread, cultural attributes, geo-political/geo-economic aspirations and footprints, power capabilities and intentions, China and India pose a dilemma to citizens, policy makers and researchers alike. From a holistic prism of enquiry, they have to face the reality of managing a relationship that for all purposes will always be less than ideal - and shall

remain so. Since there are “foundational tensions” woven into their bilateral fabric, it is advanced that every parameter used to analyse China and India has strong elements of ‘competition’, ‘comparison’ and ‘contrasting’ situated within. There are also aspects of ennui in the relationship with inexplicably large perceptual gaps on both sides.

I supplement my elaboration on China-India relations during Prime Minister Modi’s time by listing out a few variables for both the countries and these are to be juxtaposed with their seven-decade old bilateral relationship as the constant.

**Politically**, China has transited in broadly elliptical terms from individual totalitarianism to collective authoritarianism and borderline totalitarianism under Xi Jinping. This shift in political temperament has coincided with China’s reform program and is to be seen as a pragmatic choice made by the Communist Party of China (CPC) to retain its relevance and legitimacy. In India’s case, as a political system, India began its newly independent journey with experienced individuals who strived to build institutions. A concurrent development was the beginning of ‘family politics’ at the national level, which has morphed into most states of the country. Domestic politics in other words triumphs, with foreign policy becoming a reflex mechanism of statements and high level visits, and little else. Politically if China’s political credo is ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics,’ a fig leaf for capitalism, India has a political system with ‘family characteristics’ largely, with the exception being the current political party in power, the BJP.

**Economically**, China has moved from a centralized command economy model to one where entrepreneurship – by the state and the individual - is valued. The ‘socialist characteristics’ in China’s economic success has the stamp of political ideology, with all land owned by the state. India has transited from the experiment of Nehruvian socialism and ‘mixed economy’ to that of a largely free market, where regulatory mechanisms function as ‘referees.’ It has to be added though that individual entrepreneurship in India was never comprehensively constrained by the state.

**Socially**, China has forged far ahead of India in every possible manner – life expectancy, education, primary health care, access to public amenities etc. while India faces the ignominy of being one of the laggards stalling the noble aims of the UN’s Millennium Development Goals.

**Ideologically**, China has abandoned its doctrinaire postures it had adopted in the first few decades of its existence and adopted a more or less ideologically agnostic approach

designed to derive benefits, both domestic and external. In the realm of foreign policy, this agnostic temperament morphs into the arbitrating of power and influence. India has made the transition where it underplays its past foreign policy shibboleths – ‘Non-alignment’ – yet cautious to not be labelled as a ‘camp follower’ of the prevailing order where ‘liberal institutionalism’ and hosannas in its favour outflank all other alternatives, if any.

**Globally**, China is one of the pillars of the international structures of governance and has the necessary heft and voice to have its interests accommodated. Being a member of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) gives China at the podium of the very highest echelons of power. India on the other hand is an aspirant to those very forums where heft counts, yet falls short primarily owing to its own lack of clarity as to what it wants. India was offered a place at the UNSC after the second world war which was politely refused by Nehru who wanted China to be in the UNSC!

**Psychologically**, China behaves as an ‘actor’ well-conditioned to the ways of the international system and assiduously prepares itself to be part of constructive solutions to ensure stability and spread its influence. India, follows an approach where it seeks to maximize its influence in global forums and its views taken seriously. In its bilateral relations with China, the catharsis of 1962 motivates its policy makers.

**Epistemologically**, Sino-Indian relations need to define or ascribe ‘values’ – to themselves, each other and the rest - and this kind of an approach is most suitable while examining specific issues – such as their respective political systems, economic progress, social cleavages, environmental issues which are going to be the leitmotif of a bilateral beyond individual initiatives and require a broad consensus in the political spectrum in India on how to engage with China. Adopting a ‘personal’ approach to foreign policy at the expense of the ‘institution’ is a recipe for self-imposed shackles constricting India.

## **Conclusion**

These listed variables are neither exclusive nor comprehensive but are to be seen as contributing to the making of ‘categories’ that could be used to frame an ontological approach to study Sino-Indian relations. Where India needs to introspect and examine in detail and find solutions, has to look beyond the ‘prisoner’s dilemma’ the war of 1962 holds the country in thrall and dread of everything China does and doesn’t.

Narendra Modi was elected to power bringing a fresh approach to politics in India. The past few years have witnessed a frittering away of an opportunity to correct several anomalies plaguing the country. India's foreign policy has become a casualty in the obsession of those in power to focus on transforming the domestic political agenda to an ideological majoritarian construct. Foreign policy becoming the expression of an individual subverts institutions and opinions. The country could perhaps imbibe the example of Germany where leading political parties have think tanks explicating on all issues facing the country including foreign policy. For the world's largest democracy to learn from a successful democracy is much needed.

**建議引述方式：**

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