

**SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS IN THE NINETIES:  
SECURITY IMPERATIVES**

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**Submitted by**

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**CERTIFICATE**

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, “ **SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS IN THE NINETIES: SECURITY IMPERATIVES**”, submitted by **Ms. ANTIA MATO BOUZAS** in partial fulfillment for the award of **MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY** in Jawaharlal Nehru University, is a product of the student's own work, carried out by her under my Supervision and guidance.

It is hereby certified that this research work has not been presented for the award of any other degree or diploma by any University in or outside India and may be forwarded to the examiners for evaluation.

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## ***Preface***

This work focuses on Sino-Indian relations in the nineties when many changes have taken place in the world affairs. The end of the bipolarity has opened the door to a new definition of the present times, the so-called *new world order*. Apart from the continuation of the US hegemony, there is a trend that third countries want to create a multipolar system. Among them, but with different objectives and strategies, there are the two big Asian powers which are the object of this study. China has emerged as a big power and big contender in Asia to the US dominance replacing the previous role of the USSR. India wants to play a decisive role in Asia in order not to be undermined by Chinese power.

The essence of this dissertation is to deal with security aspects which are object of disagreement between India and China. Although the own concept of “security” can be a subject of discussion, in this work will be considered the traditional way, as a matter of defense of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of a country. Economic security is mentioned and has a relevant role to understand the developments which have taken place in the last decade in China. But the main way in which India defines its defense against China is as a security threat, as a source of conflict. India’s security strategy is to counterbalance China, with whom it has pending issues such as the settlement of one of the longest borders in the world.

The post-Cold War era started for the Sino-Indian relations with the normalisation process after Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to China in december 1998. In fact, the nineties was the decade where the consolidation of the normalisation in the relations between the two countries took place. Some factors related to the changes in the new world order benefited this rapprochement, such as the ending of close ties between New Delhi and Moscow. Notwithstanding, these others are still on the agenda as in the case of the Sino-Pak collaboration “against” India.

The progress in the negotiations for the border settlement has brought peace to this area and has diminished the tension. Two agreements were signed in 1993 and 1996 to maintain the peace and tranquility along the border and an agreement on military personnel was also signed. While both sides are committed to discuss these issues, in other areas there is substantial disagreement, such as the nuclear issue. Sino- Indian relations reached a low point in May 1998 after Indian nuclear tests. China is not able to accept India as an equal nuclear power and states to preserve the existent discriminations among the traditional powers.

The nineties has not brought any major solution to the permanent Sino-Indian rivalries but it is also necessary to point out that the relationship between the two largest countries in the Asian continent is crucial to maintain the peace and stability in the region. For that reason, the beginning of a new phase of cooperation, taking into consideration that there are also disagreements, should be observed as a major change in this period. Since the fifties, India and China did not enjoy such a warm environment that both the sides have built now gradually.

Apart from that, the realism in international relations makes one look at China as a source of potential conflict for India. The similarities due to their size, population and resources make them potential enemies in the fight for a predominant role in Asia. There also exists an element of distrust due to the experiences of the past. The nature of the countries is not static and in this sense is necessary to underline the great dynamism which Beijing has shown to adapt to the new circumstances. The logic of Sino-Indian relations is that one of creating a counterbalance to the other's power. Due to this, some scholars have pointed out that relations between these two powers is similar to the US-USSR rivalry during the Cold War period. This perception has gained substance with arguments such as the explanations by the Indian Prime

Minister for the nuclear tests conducted in May 1998 by India and the modernization programme in the armament and military field adopted by China. Moreover, these two countries have developed a foreign policy in order to gain influence in different areas in the Asian continent.

The present work will examine the Sino-Indian relations during the nineties from an historical and analytical perspective. This research work is descriptive and is based on secondary sources as well as some primary sources such as government documents and agreements.

There are four main chapters ending with the conclusion. The first chapter attempts to give a historical background of the Sino-Indian relations since the creation of the People's Republic of China and when India became an independent country. It tries to explain the ups and downs along forty years. It focusses on why the divergences had emerged creating a very hostile situation ending in the 1962 war and then the distance between the two countries.

The second chapter deals with the security aspects which confront India and China and make them suspicious of each other and exploit their rivalries. The nuclear and the border issue, related to the Tibetan problem, will be analysed. India's becoming a nuclear power has had an impact on its relations with China and has changed Beijing's security calculus. At the same time, on the border issue, the setting of Joint Working Groups (boosted when Rajiv Gandhi visited China in 1986) and the subsequent agreements to approach this problem has created a positive atmosphere to ending in a solution in the future.

The third and four chapters deal with the Sino-Indian relations in the context of their immediate scenario. As big powers, they want to play a major role in the region which diminish the other's influence, though this is not particularly against



the other. The third chapter examines the Sino- Indian relations in the South Asian context as a region of India's predominance or *natural medium* due to deep historical and cultural links. The position which India enjoys in South Asia is unique but is undermined by China's attitude to encircle India in a hostile neighbourhood. This policy was very active in the past and although it still continues in the case of Pakistan, it has substantially changed with other small South Asian countries such as Sri Lanka. The improvement of Sino- Indian relations has had a positive impact in their relations with the Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the extraregional powers which have an impact or are affected by the evolution of the Sino-Indian relations in the nineties. Concretely, it China's policy in South East Asia and its maritime interests in order to gain presence in the Indian Ocean and its claims in the South China Sea will be analysed. This particular policy is indirectly related with India's interests because it affects its immediate area of influence, that is, the sovereignty of its territorial sea. It will try to portrait the existent dynamism in the nineties after the receding influence of the superpowers and the necessity to fill this *vacuum* by local powers ( China and India).

The last chapter will sum up the conclusions on the basis of this research work, trying to underline the major points analysed in the previous chapters.

***Chapter 1. Sino- Indian relations: a historical overview***

***1.- Introduction***

***2.- The Nehru period***

***\* The Tibetan factor***

***\* The border dispute***

***3.- The Indira Gandhi period***

***4.- First steps towards normalisation***

***5.- Changing perceptions***

## 1.- Introduction

The bilateral relations between countries sharing a common geo-political space is a product of interaction and differentiation. Interaction because any country cannot be isolated from its geographical location and it is forced to deal with this reality. The differentiation phase is related to the nation building process. First of all, one country defines itself on the basis of its boundary, signifying the end of one territory which belongs to one state and the beginning of the new one. The sovereignty and territorial integrity is crucial for the development of the nation state.

Morgenthau defined the relationship between the countries in terms of *national interest*. In the international arena, the nations want to achieve their objectives in order to maximize their own benefit. In the context of a plurality of actors, there is competition in which clashes are unavoidable. Also, Kennedy, in his book *The rise and fall of the big powers*, explains a similar view to explain the history of international relations. For example, the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 meant the end of the British hegemony and the “rise” of the North American one.

The context of Sino-Indian relations has its specific roots and a history of more than half a century. The British colonizers used India as a base for the expansion of their interests in Asia, mainly against Russia in central Asia. The British India signed treaties with other powers and some of these treaties which are still in use, were inherited by the new independent state of India in 1947. The British legacy left a common feature, the border question, in all colonized countries of Asia or Africa.

One can see a map of Africa and observe the geometrical boundaries which differentiate the countries. In many cases, they do not respect ethnic divisions and then, when those countries gain independence, internal disputes within a country can

give rise to civil wars. In Asia the boundary problem shares similar characteristics with that of Africa but a mention has to be made of the fact that the two societies are quite different from each other. The ancient civilizations of India and China developed a broad administration in which they integrated different ethnic groups and at the same time they fostered trade and exchange of knowledge within themselves.

When India became independent, it was very weak. This was due to geographical and political factors too. First of all, India was located strategically in South Asia. The emergence of Pakistan was seen as an opposition, and as an antagonistic reaction to its multi-ethnic society but what has to be kept in mind is the fact that there were two Pakistans, the Eastern (now Bangladesh) and the Western. In case of war with Pakistan, India would have to face two fronts. The civil war in China was also a matter of concern because it was India's biggest neighbour. Apart from this, the surrounding small countries made it impossible to find strong allies.

The emergence of the People's Republic of China meant the end of a period of instability in the country which was observed with distrust by the international community, especially the western bloc. It was the beginning of the Cold War and the Asian space was a matter of concern for the United States. If, in Europe the western allies balanced the eastern bloc, in Asia, the Soviet Union and China on one 'side' represented a threat to the rest of the countries.

India inherited the democratic model in a mixed market economy. Also, the political parties had developed from the nineteenth century and the culture of participation and mobilization was there. The existence of the Chinese and the Soviet communist regimes was not an impediment to develop relations with these countries, especially with the Chinese that will be discussed here. Nehru was very concerned about this situation and it was reflected in his support for the doctrine of non-

alignment. India wanted its own space, free from the communist dictatorships as well as the western perceptions. The democratic form of government was crucial to maintain a distance from the communist bloc and also non-adherence to the United States sphere of influence became vital in order to preserve its independence and to create a peaceful coexistence in the region.

Some authors such as Ranganathan and Khanna analyse the history of Sino-Indian relations as a story of misperceptions.<sup>1</sup> Others, such as Harish Kapur, say that it was a failure of the Nehruvian foreign policy towards this country<sup>2</sup>. Both positions can be discussed. First of all, the conditions of new independent India and the emergence of the People's Republic of China after a civil strife were not very different. The two countries occupied a vast territory with multiethnic-linguistic groups. So, the first task before the two countries was national consolidation. This process involved the marking of boundaries which creates a situation of opposition between two contiguous territorial areas.

## **2.- The Nehru period**

Nehru's approach towards independent India was to establish good neighbourly relations in order to facilitate economic development and prosperity. Recognising that the Himalayan kingdoms of Bhutan, Sikkim and Nepal were a vital space of influence for India, Nehru adopted a position of preserving their security by signing treaties with the three countries<sup>3</sup>. At that time, China was not an immediate neighbour, although shared borders with India in some points, and the existence of Tibet as a buffer area reduced the possibility of threat for India as such.

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<sup>1</sup> Ranganathan C. V. and V. C. Khanna, *India-China. The way ahead. After " Mao's India war "* ( New Delhi, 2000), p.7

<sup>2</sup> Harish Kapur, *India's foreign policy, 1947-92: shadows and substance*( New Delhi, 1994), p.93

<sup>3</sup> India signed a treaty of Friendship with Bhutan in 1949 and also with Nepal and Sikkim

In the case of China, the situation was a little different. The “new” definition of the country was characterised by the communist ideology. The weight of the ideological factor in international relations is highly debatable. Even in the Cold War era where the two blocs were constituted on the basis of ideological divisions, *communism vs capitalism*, action preceded theory. Although reality shows that ideology by itself is not significant, it had its importance in the new Republic of China under Mao’s dictates. In order to differentiate China from the Soviet Union the former adopted a policy that was a disaster at domestic level and this contributed to its isolation at the international level.

Tibet was the starting point which opened a process of differentiation and distance between India and China. Through Tibet, India took stock of problems in the northern boundaries<sup>4</sup> and some steps were taken to create a good atmosphere to solve the situation. The 1954 Agreement on Trade and Intercourse recognised in its preamble five principles of peaceful coexistence, the so called Panchsheel, as a the result of changes that were taking place in India’s northern borders. Panchsheel signified for Nehru a guarantee in his policy of non-confrontation<sup>5</sup>. In the case of China, Panchsheel provided the framework to intervene in Tibet because its interpretation of mutual understanding “was meant to that China would not accept the legality of territorial settlements imposed by the British or the Tsars”<sup>6</sup>. Moreover, both the countries stated that the non-interference in each other’s domestic affairs provided China considered Tibet as a domestic affair.

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<sup>4</sup> “ China’s occupation of Tibet had rendered 2000 miles of the border between India and Tibet as a border between India and China, giving the problem of the security of India’s northern frontiers a new dimension”, Nancy Jetly, *India-China relations 1946-1977* ( New Delhi, 1979), p.18

<sup>5</sup> “Nehru’s whole thinking and strategy on national security was to seek out political solutions to situations of conflict”, Harish Kapur, n. 2, p.23

<sup>6</sup> Ranganathan C.V. and V. C. Khanna, n. 1, p.32

### \* The Tibetan factor

From its geographical location, Tibet occupies an important strategic space known as the Tibetan plateau. This region also facilitates the communication with the sensitive and vital province of Sinkiang, an area rich in resources but with ethnic instability<sup>7</sup>. A similar situation that India suffers in the Northeast but with different dimensions. Tibetan links with China were built on the basis of colonial powers' (British) quest to expand their influence on the region and this was an outcome of their fear of Russian expansion in the beginning of the century.

The British, in the Simla Conference held in October 1913 “while recognizing Chinese suzerainty over Tibet also expressively stipulated for the autonomy of Tibet”<sup>8</sup>. Suzerainty is a colonial formula that creates a lot of problems because it does not recognize sovereignty and there is no right to self determination. It is a kind of subjection on the basis of a feudal relationship. In this case, no country recognized Tibet as a independent state<sup>9</sup> though broadly speaking, it had enough requirements to be considered as such.

When India gained independence, there was the problem of British legacy. The Republic of India is a successor state of the British India and because of this, it inherited all the treaties' duties signed by the previous government. In this sense, the then Indian government was respectful of the previous compromises. Its attitude with respect to the borders was to maintain the historically-created ones and this was the policy that Nehru's government followed.

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<sup>7</sup> see “China's Xingiang Conundrum” by Manoj Mishra in Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo (eds.) *The Peacock and the dragon* (New Delhi, 2000), p.333 This paper focus on the Uighur nationalism

<sup>8</sup> Nancy Jetly, n.4 , p. 14

<sup>9</sup> Ranganathan C.V. and V C Khanna, n. 2. , p. 26

China did not accept the British demarcated borders and stood for a new delineation based on custom and historical links. China never accepted the British drawn McMahon Line of 1914 between India and Tibet<sup>10</sup>. The ambivalent situation of the 1913 treaty and China's stand on the McMahon Line created a problem when India gained independence and was the successor state of the British India and then the new Chinese government of the People's Republic of China reach the power in 1949. On the one hand, China never questioned the Indo-Tibetan border before 1949 which is an implicit acceptance of recognition because China considered Tibet as a part of its territory. On the other, there is the problem that India, as an independent country, accepted Tibet as a autonomy region of China without any border settlement. In this sense, Beijing interests were quite ambiguous, even they could be called as "expansionist".

In the case of India and China, the lack of documents was evident and created a conflict because in the geographical location of the Himalayas where there were many uninhabited areas it was difficult to establish the limit. So, for instance, "China's claims were primarily based on Tibetan-not Chinese-documents, which would be valid only if India recognizes Tibet as a part of China"<sup>11</sup>. India took an ambiguous stand because although it recognised the special relations which Beijing enjoyed with Tibet, India had to give up to its own links with this region.

Some scholars such as Giri Deshingkar say that in "The 1950 new Indian map showed the McMahon line as 'undemarcated'; for the middle and the western sector,

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<sup>10</sup> Mohan Malik J., "India's Relations with China Post- Soviet Union: Less Co-operation, more Competition" in Stuart Harris and Gary Klintworth (eds), *China as a great power: Myths, realities and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region* (New York: 1995), p. 131

<sup>11</sup> Dawa Norbu, "Tibet in Sino-Indian relations", *Asian Survey* (Berkeley), Vol XXXVII, N° 11, Nov. 1997, p.1803



the legend said 'boundary undefined'"<sup>12</sup>. This is an evidence that there were some doubts about where the border used to exist and there were some important claims made before as soon as India became independent, by the Tibetan government. Notwithstanding, this China's attitude was different because although it did not recognise the McMahon line with India; it had, however, no problem to do it with Burma while its maps Arunachal Pradesh was under Chinese territory.

The Sino-Indian border problem arose, as has been mentioned before, because of China's occupation of Tibet in 1950 and become a crucial issue when the People's Republic Army suppressed Tibet's autonomy in 1959. Absorbing this region in central Asia completely changed India's concept of area of influence. From now onwards, India had to look towards its small neighbouring countries to project its influence and reinforce its security in the Himalayas. India could not approach the north. Only the buffer states of Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan were in the middle.

The 1954 treaty guaranteed China's free action in Tibet because of the policy of "non interference in the domestic affairs of the other" but India's benefit from signing this treaty was minimum. In fact, Panchsheel was a kind of cooperation treaty from Nehru's point of view. He wanted to solve the dispute in a amicable fashion trying to avoid a conflict that India was not ready to face. India acted in a manner so as to keep China in its place. If the period from which both the countries became independent is analyzed, India was always trying to temper the relationship with its neighbour.

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<sup>12</sup> Giri Deshingkar , "India-China Relations: The Nehru years", *China Report* ( New Delhi), Vol. 27, No. 2, 1991, 97. He also suggested that "In that map ( 1950), Nepal, Sikkim and Bhutan were shown outside India. But in the map published in 1954, the Mc Mahon line was shown as a firm boundary and so were the boundaries in the middle and western sectors".

## **- The Panchsheel**

The five principles of Panchsheel stated in the preamble of the Agreement on Commerce and Communication between China's Tibet and India were the basis of the Sino-Indian relations during the fifties but their duration was not too long. Signed in 1954, they dealt with: (i) mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (ii) mutual non-aggression; (iii) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (iv) equality and mutual benefit; (v) peaceful coexistence.<sup>13</sup> Notwithstanding this, Panchsheel can be perceived in different ways.

These principles pretended to regulate the Sino-Indian relations in the context of the Cold War and the non-adherence to the imperatives of any superpower but at the same time they wanted to be extended to the relations between the developing countries. The basic premise of Panchsheel was the respect to the state and the respect between states as equal. It needs to take into consideration the nature of the Chinese state and the Indian one. China, as a communist state did not rely on a democratic India whose image and democratic features were linked with the West. India was apprehensive of the expansion of communism which could destabilize the young democracy (China had at that time close links with the Communist Party of India). The Panchsheel gave a framework to rely on each other in spite of the differences because there was a guarantee about each other's domestic affairs.

When the effective suppression of Tibet's autonomy took place in 1959, India's took a middle stand and this did not satisfy anybody. Granting asylum to the Dalai Lama was a gesture of sympathy which created problems with its big neighbour because it made India suspicious to Beijing's eyes of Tibetan revolts to create

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<sup>13</sup> Nancy Jetly, n. 4, p.36

instability in the region. Otherwise, India's recognition of Tibet as an integral part of China was seen by many scholars as a gesture of weak attitude. "Nehru government should have moved energetically to ensure international recognition of Tibetan independence even before the Communist consolidated their position in China"<sup>14</sup>. There were different interpretations on this stand.

On one side, since India never had territorial ambitions in Tibet, it could openly support Tibetan cause. Secondly, India was not in a position to defend Tibet from the Chinese because India did not want to confront its big neighbour. The last perception can be presumed as correct. But, admitting China's incorporation of Tibet, India had to deal with it squarely. Also, "Chinese made it clear on numerous occasions and in various indirect ways that the People Republics of China had no intention of extending its power beyond Tibet"<sup>15</sup>. For this reason, India adopted an attitude of non-confrontation understanding that China was acting in its legitimate right over this territory.

Giving asylum to the Dalai Lama provoked Chinese negative reaction. India was considered as the place where Tibetan refugees organized insurgence activities in order to create instability in Tibet from China although the Indian government prohibited them to use Indian soil to take part in political activities. Also, China saw that India could play the "Tibetan card" against it in order to embarrass the former. In this sense it is important to note that India never changed this attitude and never criticised China on this issue in the international fora as China did on Kashmir or other regional developments.

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<sup>14</sup> Ranganathan C V and V C Khanna, n. 2, p. 26

<sup>15</sup> Dawa Norbu, "India, China and Tibet", n. 7., p.287

It has been said that Nehru applied to China his principles on non-alignment and peaceful coexistence and some people have questioned this attitude. During the Chinese conflict in 1962, Nehru was criticised by the parliament<sup>16</sup> but he was convinced about his position. First of all, there were ideological reasons for Nehru's position on China. When India became independent, like all colonized countries, it was politically and economically weak. To create an immediate environment of non-hostility was the first task, in order to foster a better environment for development. The Indian economic model was mixed but socialist orientated. At the same time, since India had failed to maintain good relations with Pakistan, it had to look towards the north. Nehru wanted a geopolitical space free from the United States' and Soviet influence. The policy of peaceful coexistence was the framework to develop its capabilities and to stop the expansion of the Cold War 'environment' in Asia.

With respect to non-alignment, it has to be seen as a strategy that guaranteed India's "full independence and respected international status"<sup>17</sup> At the same time, after China's became a Communist country, non-alignment was the best option to keep peace in the region. India did not fear Soviet Union's close relationship with China but the United States perceived this new reality as extremely dangerous.

It is interesting to note that the principles signed in the Panchsheel between both the countries were then recognised as the basis of non-alignment in the Bandung Conference and in the United Nations Charter<sup>18</sup>. These principles were the instruments to establish an alternative order between these two big countries in Asia, and stability and prosperity in the region was dependent on them.

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<sup>16</sup> Nancy Jetly, n. 4, pp. 175-6

<sup>17</sup> Surjit Mansingh, *India's search for power; Indira Gandhi's foreign policy 1966- 1982* ( New Delhi, 1984), p. 14

<sup>18</sup> Wen Boyou, " China and India in the New Intenational Order", *China Report*, Vol. 29, 3 ,1993, p. 288.

China broke the principle of “peaceful resolution of controversies” with the 1962 war and accused India of having involved itself with the Tibetan issue. At the same time, some authors such as Harish Kapur and Surjit Mansingh question India’s search for external assistance during the war in the context of non-alignment<sup>19</sup>.

India never anticipated the 1962 war and even during the conflict there was a kind of feeling about its inability to confront the situation. Also, after 1959 when the clashes in the border area had become continuous, there was never a serious initiative to confront China. Although the debates in the Indian parliament suggested a defensive policy towards this country, in some cases calling for open war, Nehru’s government never took any step in order to create an open conflict and Nehru’s own decision was just a reflection of India’s limitations in defense.

#### **\* The border dispute**

“The boundary dispute between India and China is the biggest unresolved problem in relations between the two countries”<sup>20</sup>

India and China share border disputes in all the sectors but the most important territorial claims are concentrated in the eastern sector, possessed by India, and the western sector by China, with the claiming of the main area of the Aksai Chin which was occupied during the 1962 conflict ( 14500 square miles). First of all, the eastern sector is a territory rich in natural resources. But, apart from that it is an area of Tibetan influence, with close links to China. The western sector which comprises the regions of Ladakh and Kashmir has strategic importance for both India and China.

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<sup>19</sup> Surjit Mansingh., n. 15, p. 16

<sup>20</sup> Ranganathan C.V..and V. C. Khanna, n. 2, p.166

As it has been noted before, the border dispute arose when China occupied Tibet in 1950. Notwithstanding this, both the sides did not recognize the existence of a dispute till 1959. In this year, Zhou En Lai<sup>21</sup> submitted a proposal to Nehru on 7th November in order to maintain *status quo* to avoid the increasing tension between the two sides. He suggested that “the troops of India should withdraw by 20 kilometers from the Line of Actual Control in the Eastern Sector( McMahon line) and from the Chinese claim line in the western sector”<sup>22</sup>. Nehru replied with a counterproposal because the Chinese vision was unfavourable to India in the eastern sector. Nevertheless, both the sides never set a committee or attempted seriously to create a framework in order to solve the problem. Both the sides did not take into consideration the magnitude of the dispute at that time and they believed in mutual adjustments.

China decided ( with the attack on 20 of october of 1962) to punish India to put to an end the continuous clashes between the two sides of crossing of LOC. A sudden attack launched by China in all the sectors along the border made it difficult for India to respond appropriately. But at the same time there are other factors which are necessary to be taken into consideration. The Chinese action can be considered as a action of self-affirmation or self-confidence. The objective was not only to gain Indian territory but also to demonstrate its power in the region. At that time, the regime of Beijing faced isolation from its Soviet counterpart, with whom it shared territorial disputes, apart from the ideological factor<sup>23</sup>. Notwithstanding, China did not gain a substantial territory in the war ( 3000 square kilometers out of the 90000

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<sup>21</sup> Apparently the author of this proposal was Mao. See Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 2, p. 21

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p. 21

<sup>23</sup> “ the worsening Sino-Soviet dispute- which was closely linked to ideological and power struggles within China and the domestic economic policies adopted by Mao himself- played a critical role in determinig his mode of handling problems with India”. Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 2, p. 14.

claimed) and it did not continue the war. The reason behind it was the possibility of the interference of the major powers in case of a long time conflict with India in a context where Beijing would be fighting alone.

With this geopolitical scenario, why did China not endeavour to have good relations with India?. In the context of Maoism, ideological factors were relevant. There was a perception of India as a bourgeois society as well as an ally of the western powers. The democratic model was also a representation of western liberalism and the image of Nehru was essentially pro-western. There was a lack of confidence between the two countries.

### **3.- The Indira Gandhi period**

After Nehru's death in 1964, the Lal Bahadur Shastri cabinet took over for two years and then when he passed away, Indira Gandhi took the reigns of the government. This period was described as maintaining a distance in the relationship between the two countries. The level of talks was minimum<sup>24</sup> and India's doctrine of non-alignment was redefined to be more realistic. At the same time, India took note of its mistakes of the past and initiated a defense policy.

Indira's non-alignment meant a close relationship with the USSR that questioned the concept itself. This alliance was helpful to India in order to develop its programme in defense and to counterbalance its neighbour's. Notwithstanding this, the Soviet Union could never participate in the 1962 war helping India because it would mean the interference of the United States. In this context it is interesting to note that Asia, especially the region that we are dealing with, became a game of zero

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<sup>24</sup> Mansingh Surjit, n. 15, p. 196

sum, not only in the Himalayas but also at the international level. The big powers supported all possible conflicts but never participated actively.

Indira Gandhi 's foreign policy can be called as "hegemonic" boosting India's self-confidence. The first serious conflict that India faced after 1962 was the 1965 war with Pakistan when this country was defeated in spite of Chinese support. The second one was the emergence of Bangladesh with India's help that China strongly criticised in international fora qualifying India as "expansionist" though some years latter China used Bangladesh and its policy of arms purchases to 'protect its sovereignty against New Delhi's designs'.

The image of India deteriorated a lot in the world after the 1962 war<sup>25</sup> but China also was seen as an imperialist country. Nehru's non-alignment was completely idealistic without any basis on the grounds that it could not foresee the conflict. Indira Gandhi would change this and from now on this doctrine becomes a practise of "freedom to choose the partner", either Soviet Union or the United States. India got a stable ally in the USSR in the military mainly and an economic help-aid in the US.

China felt a complete isolation and tried to find a partner in the region capable of minimize India's role in the South. It is the beginning of the Sino-Pakistan collaboration on the basis of their mutual rivalry with India. The counterbalance would be given for the Indo-Soviet rapprochement. With Pakistan, China restrained India and impeded its expansionism in South Asia creating a hostile neighbourhood. After the 1965 Indo- Pak war, Beijing realized India's power and although it supported Pakistan, giving it arms, it never had a real interest to intervene. China's pretensions were only to maintain India 'occupied' with Pakistan and to minimize the

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<sup>25</sup> Kapur, Harish, n. 2, p. 26



possibility of a potential big power. The good relations between Beijing and Islamabad gave place to another problem on India's conflictive northern borders: the cession by Pakistan of 5120 square kilometers to China in the Pakistani occupied Kashmir<sup>26</sup>.

With respect to the border, after the Colombo proposals, China opted to retire twenty kilometers from the border following the requisites of the 1959 Zhou Enlai proposal but the resolution of the dispute was kept pending. After that, there was a distance between both the countries and they tried not to confront each other although the *status quo* in the border was not observed when in september 1967 there were clashes in the area of Tibet-Sikkim, at Nathu La<sup>27</sup>.

By that time, the level of exchange was minimum between both the countries and it was the beginning of the Chinese nuclear programme which made India re-examine its security stands on the nuclear issue. China conducted its first nuclear test in 1964 which was strongly criticized by India and became a source of fear. India's nuclear programme was only meant for peaceful purposes.

It has been said that "Indira Gandhi did not give a high priority to China when she first time came to power"<sup>28</sup> but maybe the circumstances were not very positive. Her attitude was to restrain China and to earn self-reliance in order to gain India its own place in Asia. India's intervention in the emergence of Bangladesh or the annexation of Sikkim can be seen in this way and also as a means to avoid the Chinese 'constraints' of its vital space through Pakistan and Burma.

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<sup>26</sup> Anil Joseph Chandy (comp.), "A cronology of Sino-Indian relations", n. 7, p. 439

<sup>27</sup> Mansingh, n. 17., p 196.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, p.204

#### 4.- First steps towards normalisation

In 1979, the visit of the foreign minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to Beijing had a profound effect on the relations with this country. Although he was a strong critic of Nehru's policy towards China in the fifties and during the 1962 war, he was concerned that a cordial approach to this country was necessary. The strategy of the government was related to change India's "dependence" on their relationship with the Soviet Union. Improving the relations with China would relax the tension and it would discourage any interference of the powers in the region. This would guarantee India's independence and accord to its non-alignment doctrine.

Vajpayee put forward the problems relating to the border demarcation and the Chinese support to insurgence in the northeast in the Chinese agenda. The Chinese agreed to stop assisting these groups but with respect to the border issue there was a deadlock because yet again different perceptions in their respective foreign policies made it impossible to concentrate on this issue.

Indira Gandhi's second period pursued more dynamism in order to establish an approach to China. There was a continuous exchange of visits at high level and after the visit of Vice-Premier Deng Xiaoping to India a round of talks was held to deal with the border issue<sup>29</sup>. The first of these rounds took place in Beijing from 10-14 December 1981 and there the differences between the two sides became pronounced. Even though the border issue was crucial for India, the two countries were more concerned about first creating the appropriate climate through exchanges in areas such as trade, culture and science and then deal with the border issues.

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<sup>29</sup> Den Xiaoping's proposal was to keep the *status quo* in the western sector in exchange for the China's recognition of McMahon line in the eastern sector. .Abhijit Ghosh , " Dynamics of India-China normalisation", *China Report*, Vol 31, N° 2, 1995 p.252

During these rounds of talks, China agreed to India's view of a negotiation sector by sector but later it started to claim some territorial compensations in the eastern sector. The relations of both the countries reached a low point when in the summer of 1986 China crossed the McMahon line in the Sumdorong Chu Valley and some clashes took place. At the same time, in October of the same year India started military exercises along the border<sup>30</sup> which were strongly criticised by China.

## **5.- Changing Perceptions**

Observing the history of the Sino-Indian relations during these fifty years a high mobility can be distinguished, with periods of manifest good neighbourhood, periods of open hostility and periods of aloofness. It is evident that tension can always exist given the characteristics of both the countries, similar size, similar large population and similar potential. For example, the way that India looks at Sri Lanka is completely different because it cannot perceive a threat at first glance from this country. So, it can be concluded that the way China and India look at each other is with mistrust.

At the same time, there is a kind of self-reaffirmation that it reverts to in a negative manner on the other side. India's explanation of the Chinese occupation of Tibet and its alliance with Pakistan was in terms of "hegemonic designs". The same can be said about India's role in the emergence of Bangladesh or the accession of Sikkim. All these facts respond to concrete situations and own perceptions but it is seen as a game of influence in the same way as the United States and the Soviet Union played during the Cold War period.

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<sup>30</sup> Abhijit Ghosh , n. 29, p.255

During this period, till the eighties, it is noteworthy to see the different perceptions of both the countries in their respective foreign policies. There were few coincidences such as the case of North Korea but usually, both the countries did not share many points with respect to the international affairs although both of them stood for the "Third World cause". Even when Vajpayee visit took place, the divergences with respect to the Vietnamite regime in Cambodia and the Soviet intervention in Afganistan were enough to distance themselves.

The 1962 war symbolised the end of "innocence" of India in the international relations but there was an excessive portrayal of this conflict as purely or merely anti-Indian. If the issue is analysed in details, the 1962 war was a kind of punishment, and it was a Chinese reply to the USSR looking for influence in South Asia. It was a conflict which could end in a war with the participation of the big powers. But the war of 1962 was a limited war, because the objective was concrete, especified and its length was one month and a day. Although India was defeated, it cannot be said that China won the war. In fact, the latter just made a reaffirmation on the territory that it already possessed.

One question still remains pending: why did not the two countries, China and India solve their territorial claims?. Although there are some theoretical approaches to the issue, the McMahon line did not undergo any change. The current status is most favourable to China for different reasons. First of all, it maintains the instability in the Himalayas ( the problem of the location of Bhutan and Nepal that are under India's influence). Nehru always declared these states as vital to maintain India's security. Seen from the Chinese perspective, not demarcating the border is impeding the spread of Indian influence in this region.

Also it is interesting to quote that China has not yet recognized Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh as parts of India. By doing this, it is again negating Indian influence in the Himalayan region, although India always supported Tibet as a region of China and it never questioned its dominion in this area. It is clear that China still restrains India's steps in order to conduct its foreign affairs.

Because of its location, India's northeast territory was, and still is, very sensitive and highly unstable because of secessionist movements. If the border problem with China could be solved, these kind of violent groups could soften their demands and cooperate in a democratic framework. On the other hand, the territory of Aksai Chin and some places of Uttar Pradesh are particularly problematic for India because constraining this territory contributes to isolation of the disputed area of Kashmir in a similar manner like in the northeast.

In this game China also loses something. While the border is not demarcated, China is not fully exercising its dominion on Tibet in the sense that there is no legal instrument linking this territory to rest of the country. If China demarcates its border with India it will have the sovereign right on this region. Otherwise, the present situation is not very different from the Anglo-Russian dispute in this territory.

Both India and China are maintaining the same stand and demands<sup>31</sup> which broadly speaking means a bargaining where India gets the eastern side and China the western side. India's attitude also did not change in its basic principle although it recognised some of its past mistakes such as Nehru's intransigent position regarding doubts in the maps of 'undefined' territory. In its sector-by-sector approach India

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<sup>31</sup>Giri Deshingkar, n. 11, p. 99

could take an advantage in the eastern part and get some concessions in the western sector.

This is a clear situation of a zero sum game, that is, one side loses all, the other one wins. In this context, nobody wants to give concessions but also nobody agrees with the current *status quo*. Both the countries were faced very difficult experiences related to their boundaries. In the case of China, it had to negotiate with the former Soviet Union, now Russia and three Central Asian republics, Burma, Pakistan and the difficult Vietnam. In most of the cases, the process was long but it was successful (with respect to Russia and Burma) in establishing a new phase in a mutual relationship with these countries.

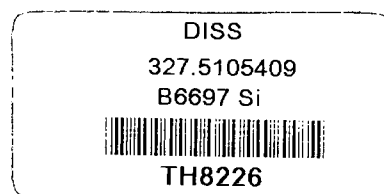
India's trajectory was different because, apart from China and Pakistan, its relationship with surrounding smaller states has deep historical and cultural links. Although these countries have always been afraid of India's hegemony, the border issue has never been so crucial and there was a respect for each other's territorial integrity.

It is important to underline that domestic factors have been relevant to define India and China's foreign policies with respect to each other, in the sixties as well as in the last two decades. In this sense China has changed its basic parameters to become a main protagonist in the international community, which has been more favourable since the desintegration of the USSR. Comparing with the sixties, China has realized that the exercise of *realpolitik* has to be according to the rules of game in the international relations. It can be said that China has adapted to the international environment to achieve its objectives.

India, as a democratic country, has faced big instability but this was not due only to foreign factors. With respect to the sixties, India's democracy had experienced a stability crisis in the early nineties. This has affected in an significant manner some decisions in the international arena such as the Chinese proposals which implicated cessation of some territorial border and that India was not able to respond to because of domestic compulsions.

Broadly speaking, India and China did not find a meeting point in their relationship during the Cold War era but this was not due only to 'misperceptions', as Ranganathan and Khanna pointed out. International conceptions and domestic factors were decisive in delineating their approach to the mutual problems. In this case, the leaders of both the countries never took a serious initiative to 'understand' the other side.

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## ***Chapter 2. Security aspects in the Sino- Indian Relations***

### ***1.- The nuclear issue***

#### ***\*India goes nuclear***

***-Vajpayee's letter to the US president and the Chinese reactions***

***-George Fernandes' declarations***

#### ***\*Post-Pokhran***

### ***2.- The border issue and the Tibetan factor***

#### ***\*The Tibetan factor***

#### ***\*The border problem: a theoretical approach***

### ***3.- An overview***



## **Security aspects in the Sino-Indian relations.**

The main reason why India matters to China is a sum of factors which makes the biggest neighbour to be the major security threat to India. This is related to the concept of power itself. Both the countries are the largest in the region, sharing similar capabilities of natural and human resources and they are the largest markets trying to develop their economies. Apart from that, China is the only security threat that India may not counterbalance, that is, because they share similar power capabilities. The 1962 war is the only conflict in which India was defeated, this is very important if it is compared with what happened during the wars with Pakistan. At the same time, China is not a static power, it keeps changing, modernizing and adapting to the new scenario. Unlike the former USSR, now Russia, China has consolidated its power in the Post- Cold War era.

The major threat of China's power is, as some Indian scholars point out, its expansionism<sup>1</sup> which consists in portraying its interests in different regional areas at the same time. Beijing has an active policy in the Himalayas as well as Southeast Asia or even Central Asia. This is also in line with the policy of confining other regional powers in the continent in their territory as a kind of encirclement. As an alternative, there are two basic options: to accept China's predominance or to create a kind of counterbalance to this big power<sup>2</sup>. As some analysts point out, the only Asian powers to counterbalance China's hegemony are India and Japan, otherwise, "China will dominate the whole of the Asia- Pacific region and become increasingly influential beyond it"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Mohan Malik J. "India's Relations with China Post-Soviet Union: Less Co-operation, More Competition" in Stuart Harris & Gary Klintworth (eds), *China as a great power: Myths, realities and challenges in the Asia- Pacific region* ( New York: 1995), p. 135

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p. 135

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, p. 135

India's security perceptions about its big northern neighbour are based on the emphasis of competition because both of them want to play a vital role in the international arena and also at regional level. They have crucial unsolved problems such as the border dispute ( which relates to the basic factor of the territorial integrity) and they keep their nuclear capabilities open which is supporting the arms race and a modernization programme in this field. India fears the strong dynamic power that is China and for that reason, to preserve its territory and to some extent, its own independence to play a role and adopt decisions, has opted for the strategy of the counterbalance. Some scholars argue that India has become stronger from that one defeat in the 1962 war but this power was not permanent. As the key security aspects dealing with China are still *open*, it is not possible to adjust to the situation .

#### **-Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China**

Rajiv Gandhi visited China in December 1988<sup>4</sup> and this event provoked a turning point in the relations between New Delhi and Beijing. The round of talks during the eighties meant a kind of periodical exchange but it did not produce any significant change. One of the main reasons was that these meetings were at bureaucratic level and were without any concrete political approach by both the sides. A major commitment was required in order to consolidate a normalisation in their relations and to reach an agreement on the border issue. Rajiv Gandhi's visit led to the setting of Joint Working Groups to boost the dialogue on border dispute as concrete steps. There was a concern that this problem could not be solved in a short time period and it confirmed the existence of a dispute.

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<sup>4</sup> Abhijit Ghosh, "Dynamics in India- China normalisation", *China Report* ( New Delhi) Vol. 31, N° 2 , 1995, p.256

The India-China Joint Press Communique on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 1988 initiated a new period in the relations between the two countries. The document mentioned the Five Principles of peaceful coexistence as the guidelines to develop their relations in the present and future. At the same time, these statements were extended to the economic relations also. It could be inferred that it was the end of the “Cold War” in the Sino- Indian relations.

During the last decade Panchsheel has been revitalised in a sense that it never had been before, in terms of respecting its content. To apply these principles to the economic sphere is also going to be important in the near future. However, China as well as India are in an initial stage to expand their economies and the conflict in this field is also a possibility in the future.

Notwithstanding this, the major security factors of concern between India and China are the unsolved border problem and the uncertainty on the nuclear issue. The nuclear problem does not seem to be a part of the main agenda of their talks. The border dispute, also can be related to other security threats perceived by either side against the other but none of them have taken a step to deal with the deadlock situation. Apart from that, some scholars note that although the territorial problem would be solved, this would not avoid the competitive<sup>5</sup> relations that both the countries have already established.

China’s criticism of India is related to the activities of the Tibetan government in exile and the refugees who try to make unstable the situation in this autonomous region. The government of Beijing calls this as “insurgency” and is seriously perturbed because, apart from the domestic implications, China wants to gain the

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<sup>5</sup> Mohan Malik J., n. 1, p. 140

consent of the international community to play a more dynamic role in the international affairs and also to maintain the foreign investment.

India 's concern about China is because of the game of encirclement played by Beijing, which has not ended with the Cold War. It tries to maintain New Delhi in a context of permanent hostile neighbourhood. India has cited the evidence of the military and nuclear collaboration of Beijing with Pakistan with whom India has had four wars because of Kashmir and which is one of the core security problems for the government at New Delhi. Apart from that, China has not recognized Sikkim as a state territory in the Indian Union since 1975, a significant position, specially when both the countries have decided to approach each other and also Arunachal Pradesh in the Northeast. The rest of the issues above mentioned are the results of a process but the gesture of the recognition of a territory is something that China can do unilaterally, at least if it has no other interests in the region, as it was manifested.

## **2. - The nuclear issue**

The nuclear issue is one of the most sensitive aspects in the Sino-Indian relations which has repercussions for the maintenance of peace and stability in Asia. Contrary to the rest of the world in the post Cold War period, nuclear proliferation has been experienced in the Asian continent where the principal countries involved are not parties of the main treaties for non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Although they promote these causes, they nevertheless continue with the research in this field and augment their arsenals.

In Asia there are countries with nuclear capabilities such as Israel, Iran, Iraq, North and South Korea, Taiwan and Japan and the declared nuclear powers: China, CIS (Russia and Kazakhstan), India and Pakistan. If this scenario is compared to the previous one ( during the Cold War) it can be said that now Asia has become much

more dangerous and destabilized in context of its nuclear powers The competition in this field has been revitalised.

This is due to several reasons. First of all, the existence of important unsolved conflicts such as Kashmir which confronts India and Pakistan, conflict between China and Taiwan, etc. Secondly, the extraregional nuclear powers, in this case the reference is only to the United States, cannot exercise a counterbalance, in the manner that they (United States and the former USSR) could do during the previous period. They can only act as external powers on a inducive way to relax the tension with some concrete policies such as the economic ones. This is, broadly speaking, the US policy towards Asia in the nineties.

But the argument of the distabilization in Asia can be discussed because it results in a situation where a new balance<sup>6</sup> exists in which all parties can lose. Another favourable factor to the unstability thesis is not mentioned often: the external support of the nuclear programmes in most of these countries. Israel enjoys US's 'blessing' to become nuclear as well. The most well known case of China's decisive role in the nuclearisation is of Pakistan<sup>7</sup>. It is a common feature of the government of Beijing to agree to a treaty later ignoring it.

As it was pointed above, most of these countries are not members of the major treaties in this issue but all of them advocate for disarmament and a peaceful world free from nuclear weapons<sup>8</sup>. China signed the NPT in 1992 but ignores its duties by 'helping' the proliferation of Pakistan. Also, there are the nuclear tests conducted by

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<sup>6</sup> *India Today*( Delhi), 8 June 1998, p. 24

<sup>7</sup> " Though Pakistan denies it, experts are agreed that china, and to a lesser extent Germany, can claim paternity of the Pakistani bomb." Manoj Joshi , *India Today*, June 8, 1998, p. 20

<sup>8</sup> "China has invariably advocated total ban and thorough dismantling of the nuclear arsenal" and China has unilaterally comitted itself not to be the first to use nuclear weapons". Wang Hongyu, "Sino-Indian Relations- Present and Future", in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *India, China and Panchsheel* ( New Delhi, 1996), p. 158

India, Pakistan and France during this decade, China is the only country that has a clear nuclear<sup>9</sup> programme carrying out a number of nuclear tests, including atmospheric ones. "Since its first nuclear explosion in October 1964, China has been annually producing between 100 and 150 nuclear devices"<sup>10</sup> India has a critical attitude to these treaties ( the CTBT and the NPT) and New Delhi thinks they are discriminatory. Although there is some kind of truth in this statement because it extends the nuclear power of the exclusive club of five<sup>11</sup> ( 5P, the five permanent members of the Security Council in the United Nations), the fact is that many developing and developed countries have adopted this treaty. However, after the Indian nuclear tests, there is no reason for India to not sign these treaties.

Other important question is what should be understood by deterrence and in what measure the slogans of the no first use have to be taken into account. India's nuclear doctrine and the Chinese one share the "non-first use"<sup>12</sup> and "minimum deterrence". The logic of deterrence is the beginning of the arms race and it has no end because the protection of national sovereignty and national integrity is a duty of every country. The no-first use has a different interpretation. With this purpose India and China are committed to not to use in spite of 'any threat' with the exception to respond to a first nuclear use. In this case, there is need to analyse the capabilities to respond, specially in the case of India.

If the triangle China- India- Pakistan is considered, India occupies an position of inferiority because it has no guarantees with respect to Islamabad, mainly because

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<sup>9</sup> Swaran Singh, "China's nuclear deterrent", in Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo (eds.) *The peacock and the Dragon: India-China relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* (New Delhi, 2000), p.51

<sup>10</sup>ibid , p. 57

<sup>11</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record* , Vol. 44, 15 may 98, p. 39. " The NPT, which also India proposed, became a completely discriminatory treaty, legitimizing the possession in eternity of nuclear weapons by the five nuclear weapon states".

<sup>12</sup> Swaran Singh, "China's nuclear deterrent", n 9, p. 71

of Kashmir. It would be difficult to use the nuclear arms as deterrence in Kashmir. India till now have not resorted to it and Pakistan also. However, the experience of Kargil shows that the confrontation may reach to such a point.. Therefore, India should be worried about the evolution of domestic developments in Pakistan, in particular to political stability and the role of armed forces.

With respect to China, after the 1962 war, the situation is much more quiet. But the regime of Beijing has made some declarations of 'threat' to Taiwan<sup>13</sup> and in this sense the attitude shows that the Chinese stand depends on different considerations. The main issue which confronts India and China, the border dispute, is not expected to be solved in a military way<sup>14</sup>. The Chinese nuclear programme was initiated in the sixties, when the relations with Moscow started to become difficult and when USSR denied assistance to the Chinese programme. For this reason, China's nuclear capabilities cannot be seen mainly anti-Indian though India is a substantial factor.

#### **\* India goes nuclear**

"Till the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1995 and the CTBT in 1996, Indian policy worked on the assumption that it was possible to guarantee national security by keeping the N-option notionally "open" and simultaneously pressing for global disarmament"<sup>15</sup>. India's decision was affected because of regional compulsions in order to guarantee security to its citizens and to protect its territorial integrity and sovereignty<sup>16</sup>. This was a result of having an adverse scenario such as

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<sup>13</sup> during winter of 1995-96 "China conducted unprecedented missile tests and military exercises across the Taiwan Strait", Swaran Singh, n.9, p. 74,

<sup>14</sup> Surjit Mansingh , "Sino- Indian security" , in Surjit Mansingh(ed), *Indian and Chinese Foreign Policies in comparative perspective* ( New Delhi, 1997) p 133. Although this is true, India is concerned about the Chinese nuclear deployments in Tibet and Xingjiang.

<sup>15</sup> *India Today*, 25 May 1998, p. 26

<sup>16</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 44, May 26, 1998, p.40

the Sino- Pak collaboration which China instigated hostility, and still continues to do so, in New Delhi's immediate regional environment.

Alongwith this line of policy, India conducted a series of nuclear tests in the desert of Rajasthan (Pokhran II) from May 11-14 1998. As a reaction, Pakistan responded to it later by conducting its own tests. The international community called for the ceasing of the tests because of the possibility of the same reaction from other powers. India and Pakistan, but mainly India, because it was the first to test, were blamed for raising the tension in the subcontinent and a lot of foreign aid was stopped.

Specially United States put sanctions on both the countries and adopted a similar stand as Beijing, although this was more severe and critical. " In fact, more than the U.S, it was China, which has been the severest critic of India following the nuclear tests"<sup>17</sup>.European Community spoke with different voices, from the most comprehensive of Britain and France to the more harsh of the Scandinavian countries. The developing countries also adopted different stands because although they are against nuclear proliferation, they share the same viewpoint on why nuclear power has to be restricted to the five major powers, where four of them express the views of the North.

In Asia, it is interesting highlight the position of the Japanese government. "Japan, for example, poses an interesting paradox. On the one hand, there is a natural abhorrence for weapons of mass destruction, and the suspension of all aid is a result of this feeling. However, this moral position is tempered by a traditional affinity to India and a natural suspicion of China"<sup>18</sup>. The same view was shared by some Southeast Asian countries.

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<sup>17</sup> Sondhi M.L. and Prakash Nanda, *Vajpayee's foreign policy*, (New Delhi, 1999), p.98

<sup>18</sup> *India Today*, 25 May 1998, p. 29



### **-Vajpayee letter to the US president and Chinese reactions**

India knew how to manoeuvre the nuclear issue when it was testing but it was incapable to do the same after the event. Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee sent a 'private' letter to the US President Clinton that reached the press. In its content, it pointed out China as the 'main reason' or 'main threat' for testing. Doing this, Vajpayee opened the 'Pandora's box' because it brought a second strong reaction by the Chinese regime to the previous more cautious<sup>19</sup> statements: "Indian nuclear tests ran against the international trend and were detrimental to the peace and stability of the South Asian region"<sup>20</sup>. Beijing blamed India for adopting such a treacherous gesture when they were trying to normalize relations with each other.

On one hand, Vajpayee's government did not take into account that though they (BJP as a party in power) were proud to achieve such an independent<sup>21</sup> action against the international criticism (Vajpayee policy is defined essentially as pragmatic), they 'sent' the explanations to the American big brother. This questioned India's position as an independent sovereign country. On the other hand, Vajpayee did not take into consideration the forthcoming visit of the American President to China and the subsequent US-China engagements. In this sense, the calculus of the Indian Prime Minister proved to be wrong. However, the Chinese interpretation of this letter was seen as a "deliberate attempt to build a nexus with anti-China lobbies in the USA"<sup>22</sup>

The hard reaction in Beijing was also provoked by the statements made by the Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes in the days preceding the tests although it

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, 1 June 1998, p. 29

<sup>20</sup> Ranganathan C.V. and V.C.Khanna, *India and China. The way ahead. After Mao's India War* (New Delhi, 2000), p 150,

<sup>21</sup> Sondhi and Nanda, n. 17, p. 112

<sup>22</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 20, p. 152

was a mere bad coincidence. China stated that India had hegemonistic designs in South Asia and it was the main contributor to the disruption of peaceful environment in Asia and expressed its “strong condemnation”<sup>23</sup>. India responded to these accusations through the government Spokesman<sup>24</sup>.

In spite of the difficult management of dealing with China, New Delhi was not mistaken about Beijing’s interests to provoke a situation of tension. Just after the nuclear tests were conducted, it was reported “regarding a Chinese ship carrying materials and equipment for use in the A. Q. Khan Research Laboratories”<sup>25</sup> in Pakistan. In this sense India’s insecurity about Chinese collaboration with Pakistan was an important factor of India becoming nuclear<sup>26</sup>. It can be said that the nuclear issue has become a vicious circle.

Vajpayee’s declarations were not at all wrong but the way they were expressed was incorrect because it went against Indian considerations on the nuclear field such as the ‘peaceful purposes’. Also, the Sino-Indian relations reached a low point which could do without Vajpayee’s letter<sup>27</sup>. It created distrust at a crucial moment when India wanted to reassert its power in the continent and it could do it with the China’s silence on the matter.

#### **-George Fernandes’ declarations.**

The declarations of the Minister of Defence to the Indian press pointing China as the major ‘threat’ for India were important in this context. “Fernandes’s frenetic pace began in early April with the charge that Chinese patrols were intruding into

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<sup>23</sup> *India Today*, 1 June 1998, p. 29

<sup>24</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol, 44, 16 May, 1998, p.35-36

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, 5 June 1998

<sup>26</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n . 20., p. 149

<sup>27</sup> China was not questioning the Indian nuclear tests in the beginning although it expressed its concern but point out China as a threat, the rest of the consequences were logic

Arunachal Pradesh”<sup>28</sup>. The Minister made a mistake (maybe because he did know about the tests) to make such statements in coincidence with the Indian nuclear tests. But he received a tacit silence from the government which confirmed its support on the same point of view.

In fact, Fernandes’s analysis were based on a theory that the main enemy is not Pakistan but China. That in a way is correct. Usually the Indian media portrays Pakistan as the biggest threat because there is an open conflict: Kashmir. But Pakistan is secure because of Chinese help. Beijing’s policy since the sixties, after the border war, was to keep India ‘occupied’ with Pakistan, all the while supporting Pakistan. Some scholars point out that even though this policy was a failure the relationship is still evident today. It is true that China, specially with some evidence of a pro-Indian attitude, is maintaining distance from the regime of Islamabad but till now it has not actually sacrificed its ally. The military support is continuous and “China has also provided Pakistan missiles to deliver the bomb”<sup>29</sup>. What is seen is that the balance of power between India and China is having a notorious relevance in the present.

But the remarks of the Minister ‘vitiating’ the atmosphere of Sino- Indian relations<sup>30</sup> in a very sensitive period when talks on the border issue were going on and both the countries reaffirmed the principles of Panchsheel. China was softening its strategy in Asia and Indian stand was seen as aggressive. These declarations had the effect that the existent conditions between India and China are not very different from those of the Cold War era

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<sup>28</sup> *India Today*, 18 May 1998, p. 18

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, 8 June 1998, p. 20

<sup>30</sup> Sondhi and Nanda, n 17, p. 102

### \* Post- Pokhran.

After the nuclear tests, Indian public opinion and political class were engaged in a discussion about signing the main treaties on the matter, specially the CTBT<sup>31</sup>. The question that arises is whether India should adhere as a “nuclear-have”. China opposes it because it tries to preserve the existing situation<sup>32</sup> though at the same time it is promoting the establishment of a multipolar order<sup>33</sup> (whether India should be a part of it or should stay out?).

China is not sure consider that “India will agree to accede to the NPT as a non-nuclear weapon power and to abandon its nuclear weapon programme entirely”<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, India has also to reassert its stands on disarmament, real commitment has to be shown because in spite of the affirmations made by relevant political leaders after the nuclear tests nothing has been done and India cannot not sustain its stand on any real fact. Some statements such as the “process of disarmament should lead to the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of all weapons of mass destruction including nuclear, chemical and biological weapons (*and*) further progress should be made towards conventional disarmament”<sup>35</sup> only express desires and there is a lack of initiatives. This criticism can be extended to China as well.

Beijing’s commitments on disarmament should be accompanied with actions. One of the most irritating things; the assistance to Pakistan should be stopped in order to gain India’s confidence and create a much more friendly environment. Also, regarding the nuclear issue, the nuclear stand of Pakistan has to be taken into

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<sup>31</sup> *India Today*, 8 June 1988, p. 34

<sup>32</sup> Rappai M.V., “ Nuclear Factor in India- China Relations”, in *Asian Strategic Review 1998-1999*( New Delhi), 1999, p.323

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p. 320

<sup>34</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 20, p. 154

<sup>35</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol, 37, Dec. 16, 1991, p. 252

consideration. The main problem is of India not signing the treaties and China signing them but not respecting them. There is a deadlock on this matter presently.

China is very reluctant to talk with India on this issue as a partner of the same level. This attitude can be seen as a replacement of the former USSR, by China in the Asian continent as the most important power ( in a multipolar world). Unlike India, Beijing's regime is adopting a "nuclear coercion as a means to achieve its policy objectives"<sup>36</sup>. This is true, in the sense that China's military doctrine is nearer to defence policy while its defence policy appears more like national objectives"<sup>37</sup>. In this context India has to treat the border issue very carefully, as the main point of disagreement between the two countries. Therefore, China's perceptions about its southern neighbour have already changed. One example is that the two countries started a kind of collaboration with the supply of Chinese Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) for the Tarapur Atomic Power Station in Hyderabad in 1995<sup>38</sup> which seems to be a relevant step.

In spite of Chinese criticism of India's nuclear tests, their relations had already normalised by the end of that year ( 1998) indicating that there is a mutual concern to build the stability in Asia. Furthermore it is relevant to note Chinese reaction to Kashmir conflict in May 1999 calling for solving the dispute by peaceful means. Different declarations have been made by the Chinese leaders since the middle of the nineties on this line. This shows a new approach to India, although the nuclear factor is not a matter of discussion in their respective agendas.

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<sup>36</sup> Swaran Singh, n. 9, p. 74

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 63

<sup>38</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol .41, January 5 , 1995

## **2.-The border issue and the Tibetan factor**

The last decade has seen some improvements on the border issue with the continuous exchange of visits at high political level and negotiations by the Joint Working Groups. Moreover, two agreements were signed on the matter related to maintain peace and tranquility on the border and with respect to the military personnel. At the end of the nineties the border trade between the two countries has grown with the establishment of some specific steps which can be augmented in the future.

In spite of these positive steps, there is no consensus about the demarcation to adopt the implementation phase. Although at the beginning of the decade the two countries agreed to solving the problem as soon as possible, this process seems to be taking long. If China's case has to be taken into consideration, it could be observed that they share some features. China shares borders with a number of countries, and it had (and still is having) disputes on it with some of them. The way Beijing's government managed this issue is extremely sensitive and tough. The case of demarcation with Vietnam and the former USSR ( Russian and the successor republics) was a very slow process.

Apart from the military exercises taken in front of the Taiwan's coast, China has not experimented any serious clash along the borders which were under negotiation with other neighbouring countries. The only point of difference between India and China border is Tibet. How China manages its issues in this region has implications on the demarcation of the border with India. From China's point of view Tibet is a strategic region which is sensitive to external influence.

During the meetings of the Joint Working Groups in every session repeatedly there was an emphasis on the maintenance of peace and tranquility along the Line of Actual Control<sup>39</sup>. In order to reinforce this task, both the countries signed the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas<sup>40</sup> on 7<sup>th</sup> September 1993. Article I states that “Pending an ultimate solution to the boundary question between the two countries , the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the line of actual control between the two sides”<sup>41</sup>.

Essentially, this treaty guarantees the *status quo* in order to relax the tension through the reduction of military forces, mutual consultations and respecting the current situation. The problem of the treaty is that it is more a declaration of good intentions than a serious mean of consideration in the above mentioned<sup>42</sup>. This treaty does not provide any specific measure to achieve and implement the articles. Although it is true that the situation along the Sino- Indian border has been more calm in the last decade, it was due to other factors also. The Article VI of the agreement points out that “the two sides have agreed that references to the line of actual control in this Agreement do not prejudice their respective positions on the boundary question”. In fact, there is no consensus about any settlement with respect to the boundary.

The other agreement adopted by the two countries on 29 November 1996 is related to Confidence Building Measures in the Military Field along the Line of

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<sup>39</sup> Since 1990 the statements of the official spokesman after the meetings on the Boundary Question are considering continuously the relaxation of the tension as a core aspect on the negotiations.

<sup>40</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol, 39, N° 9, 1993, p. 249

<sup>41</sup> *ibid*, 250

<sup>42</sup> “ The 1993 border-peace agreement was based on principles that Beijing had advocated for long to lend legitimacy to its annexation of Indian territories: Keep the frontier dispute aside and normalise relations”. Brahma Chellaney, “The Dragon’s Chicanery behind the smile”, in Shankar Sharan (ed) *India, Tibet & China* ( New Delhi, n. d), p. 59

Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas<sup>43</sup>. There, both the parties were committed to refraining the use of force against each other ( Article I) in solving the dispute. They adopted some specific measures to prevent misinterpretations that took place before, specially during the late fifties and in the early sixties when both the sides were not respecting the Line of Actual Control and accusing each other of overstepping their boundaries. In this sense the treaty provided a framework to carry on a dialogue and prevent an armed conflict. One of the major benefits till now for India by signing this treaty has been the reduction in the deployment of the army on the Sino- Indian border which has been re-deployed in the conflictive Indo- Pakistani border.

Notwithstanding this, other measures are vague and their interpretation is not clear such as in Article VI the paragraphs (3) and (4). These are concerned with military exercises and the possibility of an increase in the tension between the border personnel. In such a case, the indications like “precaution shall be taken” or the “exercise (of) self-restraint”<sup>44</sup> is more a political wish rather than a real effective stand. But the 1996 agreement has a significant importance because it regulates the situation of the armed forces with respect to a possible case of conflict. In this sense it has a practical meaning; the escalation of tension should be avoided as it is not desirable for the parties.

Besides, there is a commitment that “ the two sides agree to speed up the process of clarification and confirmation of the line of actual control”<sup>45</sup>. The problem is that there are no concrete steps to reaffirm the former statement. Both the treaties mentioned are dealing with security factors to boost a friendly frame indulgent to set

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<sup>43</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 42, November 1996, p. 169

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 171

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, article X, p. 172



up the different points of view but there is no mention about the divergences. Although these agreements are quite relevant to adopt a different approach in their bilateral relations (to normalise them), there is no substantial progress in concrete issues. It is very curious that the two agreements mentioned in the introduction, namely, the five principles of peaceful coexistence, the basic instrument which regulated Sino-Indian relations in the fifties, were not respected at that time.

The content of these treaties does not commit the parties and there is no explanation about how they should be implemented. There is no reference about how the border demarcation should be dealt with, whether it has to be negotiated sector by sector or whether by compensations. Regarding this perspective, it could be said that the negotiations are still in an early stage or in a situation of impasse because the core issue is not the object of discussion and is not dealt with, in an appropriate manner.

Notwithstanding this, it has had several important advances such as the opening of the border trade for specific points. In 1992, India and China agreed to establish the area of Tibet (in Pulan) and the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh (Gunji) for the exchange of commodities<sup>46</sup> in the market. It is relevant to note that these posts are located in the Central Sector, the least contested by both the sides. India was interested to open other point of exchanges in Sikkim but till now it has not been possible due to the stand taken by the Chinese of still not recognizing Sikkim as a state in the Indian Union.

For all these measures examined above, it could be pointed that the border demarcation is going to take a considerable time, that is, the solution to the border problem is not immediate. Apparently, both the parties are not unhappy with the current situation and a conflict for this question is quite improbable, apart from other

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<sup>46</sup> Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record*, Vol. 37, No 12, December 1991, p. 232

strategic considerations. What both the sides are concerned about is that there is no possible return to the situation previous to the 1962 conflict when there was hardly any understanding between the two countries and the violation of their positions in the border were common.

#### **-The Tibetan factor**

Since China suppressed the rights of Tibet as an autonomous region (TAR) it had to confront a growing international criticism which became particularly intensive in the nineties, mainly because of the support of strong lobbies in the United States. After the Dalai Lama received the Nobel Prize, his figure grew up to become the legitimate voice of the Tibetan people<sup>47</sup>. The religious leader tried to establish a dialogue with the Chinese government to find a 'middle way' solution to the situation in Tibet.

Some proposals have been negotiated by the Dalai Lama and the Beijing government to provide a real effective autonomy to Tibet<sup>48</sup> with broad powers but, within China. The Dalai Lama also agreed that the basis for the government of the province should be an expression of people's wishes (that is, democratic and secular). Recently there is a campaign to promote Tibet (Outer Tibet) as a Nuclear Free Zone which can provide peace and stability along the Himalayas and it considers necessary to free Tibet from nuclear weapons. This position of "neutralisation of Outer Tibet will have a peace-inducing effect on the whole Asia in general and on Sino-Indian relations in particular"<sup>49</sup>, related to the security on their borders.

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<sup>47</sup> "as support for the Tibetan cause grows and becomes more articulate, criticism of China as Tibet's "other", becomes more strident", Mira Sinha Bhattarchajea, "Self-determination for the Tibetan People: A political argument", *China Report* (New Delhi), Vol 32, N° 4, 1996, p. 353

<sup>48</sup> Five Points Peace Plan was proposed by the Dalai Lama to the Chinese leaders in September 1987

<sup>49</sup> Dawa Norbu, "India China and Tibet", n. 9, p. 294

Although these approaches to the situation of Tibet are quite relevant, other broader strategic viewpoints have to be taken into consideration. One of the most important is how China deals with this issue, particularly in a decade, such as the nineties, when the participation in the dynamics of the international system has become so crucial for Beijing. Foreign countries have criticised the violation of the human rights particularly in Tibet and in general in the whole country, as a negative feature, to impede the flow of foreign investment. In this sense, the balance is positive because China knew how to deal with it.

The Tibetan question in the Sino- Indian relations is more sensitive and Beijing cannot play the same game of politics. India had an ambivalent attitude which has been strong criticised inside and outside of the country. Specially one sector of the political class always showed a kind of sympathy for the Tibetans and criticised the Indian government for its passive stand. Notwithstanding this, different Indian governments in the last decade have reiterated in their consideration of Tibet as a part of China and it does not look likely that there will be a change in this stand.

India never in the past used the Tibetan card as China did in regard to Kashmir although it was a fact that giving asylum to the Dalai Lama and a number of refugees caused irritation to Beijing. But there is a marked difference in the stands taken by both the countries respectively regarding Kashmir and Tibet as “autonomous regions”. India here has an advantage because when Beijing supports for self-determination for Kashmiris the same can be said of Tibetans. This shows a kind of fear and in fact the Chinese aggressive policy in Tibet is to reinforce its security. This is not directly against India, though it affects it as India is a neighbouring country.

In a similar manner, India faces the same problem in Kashmir. The government of New Delhi has to be very careful when dealing with Pakistan because it also has to face other secessionist movements. But the nature of the Tibetan issue is

different because of its geographical location. Tibet is an issue of the border problem with India, for that reason India has to be specially aware to manage its policy in the Himalayas. The core issue refers to strategic compulsions more than historical, cultural or ideological reasons.

Tibet is a big region compared to Nepal or Bhutan, as a buffer area is vital to maintain peace between India and China. Nepal and Bhutan cannot play the same role as of Tibet because they are not so important in their territory to create a sufficient balance or even it could be said that the developments in these countries foster Sino-Indian rivalries. But at the same time the current situation is much more unstable. It is true that China does not have territorial ambitions beyond this region<sup>50</sup> but the way it manages relations with the small Himalayan states mentioned above, is directly not allowing India's influence in those countries.

India's policy towards China with respect to Tibet has remained the same from the fifties. This stand neither is positive nor negative but it creates a pressure on Beijing. At the same time, this China never recognized Sikkim and even claimed region of Arunachal Pradesh in order to dissuade New Delhi about possible ambitions in the Himalayas. It is relevant to note that China's image of India was essentially hegemonic and for this reason fears the southern neighbour in the immediate territory. In this sense, it could be suggested that when Beijing occupied Tibet it was to disallow the new independent India to practise the same colonial policies of the British. The Chinese Republic wanted to stop India's influence on the northern frontiers restricting it to the south.

The situation in Tibet has not changed but a dialogue between the Tibetan government in exile in India and the government of Beijing has been established.

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<sup>50</sup> Dawa Norbu, "India, China and Tibet, n.9, p. 287

This is desirable for the sake of Sino-Indian relations because if the situation in this region is normalised, the settlement of the border can reach an early solution. Otherwise, security parameters adopted by both the countries are impeding them to come to a point of agreement. If the Sino-Tibetan relations improve, Beijing does not have to be suspicious about India.

### **-The border problem**

The essential point of disagreement is the Mc Mahon Line<sup>51</sup>, considered by the Chinese, a colonial legacy. The eastern and the western sectors are the main point of discussion. With respect to the western sector it is necessary to point out the vital interest of India in this area. It is imperative that the New Delhi government adopts a strong position regarding this because of evident strategic reasons. The northeast region is one of the most unstable in the Indian territory, if this country made some compensations claimed by China such as the area of Tawang, then the whole northeast is in danger. At the same time, India should be prevented from the Chinese expansion through the south, in order to “reach” (not physically but strategically) the Indian Ocean.

The eastern sector is equally relevant for India but is not in the same way for China. The occupation of the Aksai Chin by China during the 1962 conflict is an added problem, besides the situation of Kashmir on the other side although that is an uninhabited area. In some statements made by the Chinese leaders, they accepted a possible exchange in the east for the west but the Indian government continues to disagree. An added problem is in the territory of the occupied Kashmir which Pakistan ceded to China in 1963.

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<sup>51</sup> Rani Akhouri Chanda, “India- China Negotiations on the Border Question: Towards a Conceptual Framework”, *China Report* (New Delhi), Vol 35, N° 3, 1999, p. 302

India does not reveal its cards in the sense that it never made a concrete proposal, with the exception of a negotiation of sector by sector. But there are other reasons, domestic factors, which have implications on this particular stand. The continuous changes in the governments with weak coalitions in power in the early nineties and the general political instability made it impossible for the country to cede territorial rights which demand a high consensus. Indian public opinion is very sensitive to issues related to national security and the way the political class uses these for party interests made it impossible for a movement in this regard. China, for instance, does not have such a problem because the Communist Party exercises control of power and the public opinion is secondary to the issue.

As Manoj Joshi<sup>52</sup> points out there is a basic conceptual divergence between what China considers “mutual accommodations” and the Indian “mutual adjustment”. The ‘accommodations’ have a more dynamic significance<sup>53</sup> and they imply important changes while the ‘adjustment’ is on the basis of the current situation. India is not keen on making important compensations and China wants to ‘incorporate’ some possessions in the northeast which are linked to Tibet. This last perception should be taken into account in the way as of using such a policy for other purposes. When India became independent, Tibet claimed areas in the Indian side incorporated by the British. China can use its claims in the northeast as an instrument to improve its image with the Tibetans.

Notwithstanding this, it seems as if the process of dealing with the border is going to take different phases, at least this can be said about the signing of the agreements of particular issues at a different time. The primary consensus is that “the

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<sup>52</sup> Manoj Joshi, “The Sino-Indian Border Problem”, *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), Vol XV, N° 4, October, 1992, p. 683- 694

<sup>53</sup> *ibid*, p. 683

border issue should be settled by peaceful means”<sup>54</sup> and “through friendly consultations”<sup>55</sup>. The settlement of the border is the last objective through rightful means whereas the first one is to create an appropriate environment to deal with the problem.

Chanda Rani Akhouri in her conceptual approach to this concrete question points out: “ In order to study India- China negotiations on the border question, the approach adopted herein is that of integrative analysis. In this, ‘outcome’ is explained through ‘process’, understood as running through stages in which explanation of the outcome is given by identifying performance at each successive stage.”<sup>56</sup>. This is the outcome of the Joint Working Groups which are first defining the common points, later deal with the major disagreements between the respective countries.

The confidence building measures are a clear expression that problems cannot be solved at a particular moment or given the current state of things, because both the sides completely disagree on core issues. The only commitment is that while the conditions do not change it is necessary to establish a dialogue by both sides to avoid any possible conflict which does not benefit them.

### **3.- An overview**

The Sino-Indian relations have faced a new phase during the last decade, not free from divergences but with basic points in agreement. India has gained self-confidence to confront the big neighbour of the north and it contains some important concessions. One of the most important is how China perceives Kashmir now. Although Beijing did not end its collaboration with Pakistan, it is evident that if it

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<sup>54</sup>Government of India, *Foreign Affairs Record* “ Rao’s visit to China in 1993”, vol. 39, p. 147

<sup>55</sup> *ibid*, Sino- Indian Joint Communique *China Report* (New Delhi), Vol 28, No.1, 1992, Documents., p. 89

<sup>56</sup> Rani Akhouri Chanda, ,n. 51, p. 299

wants to improve relations with India it has to adopt a more equal stand in order to deal with Islamabad. Apart from calling for a bilateral solution in Kashmir and avoiding international interference, specially because of the escalation of the tension during the Kargil war, China has to deal with the nuclear reality of India and Pakistan ( though the nuclear programme was a result of alliance with the Communist country).

China occupies a very favourable position because of the new international system. It has gained presence in the world economics, it is a “communist” country surviving to the end of the socialist world and it is a permanent member of the Security Council of the United Nations. In this sense, it has shown an important dynamism in its foreign policy adapting to the new changing conditions. But it is evident that China is for ever watchful of Indian movements.

The manner in which both the countries deal with each other shows a lack of confidence and expresses a strong realism in security matters. India can sign an agreement to relax the tension in the border question but it will never adopt the same position like the one in 1962. China also, because of its policy of ‘open doors’, has to be very sensitive to the international criticism on its domestic affairs, specially Tibet. This particular factor is a weak point in Chinese foreign affairs and has gained a big support during the last decade.

The normalisation of Sino- Indian relations has brought a new frame of approach to each other but, although economic and cultural relations have been expanded, important points of disagreement exist on security matters. The solution of the border settlement is one of them and due to divergences at conceptual level (different theoretical interpretations) it probably is not to be solved in the short term. Given the examples of how China managed its borders demarcation with other countries such as the Soviet Union and Vietnam, it is relevant to note that diplomacy



is working in bringing solutions to the issues and Beijing is committed to a solution by peaceful methods.

The nuclearisation of South Asia has been a setback to the Chinese perceptions. It now has to rethink its policy, to suit the new scenario because it was in a very comfortable position with the previous situation. This means that a technological rivalry in conventional and nuclear arms is going to persist and even be boosted by the two countries while they do not decide to adhere to the main treaties on the matter. Also, this conflict can spread over to the economic front, where the two countries dispute over foreign investment. Notwithstanding this, a real military conflict is very improbable given the commitment of both the sides to adopt peaceful means to solve their differences. In one sense, it could be said that a new situation of the Cold War has arisen between China and India where the channels of dialogue exist but there is a stalemate when they look at each other with a lack of confidence.

***Chapter 3. India and China in South Asia: a regional framework***  
***1.- South Asia***

***\*Sri Lanka and Bangladesh***

***\* Pakistan***

***\*The Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan***

***2.- A framework***

## 1.- South Asia

After the Cold War era, the South Asian region has become less disturbed by the presence of external powers, specially in the Indian Ocean, helping to spread regional rivalries with the military aid. Although this geographical area is still very replete with ethnic insurgences and unsolved conflicts, the role of third countries have diminished. The Indocentric character of South Asia gives India a dominant role, a very singular one compared to other regions of the world. No other country, because of geographical and historical reasons occupies the same position.

The nineties have seen some patterns of change and continuity. For the first time, there is a regional agreement working for a free trade area in the subcontinent and its island states where the disparities between members are pretended to be solved. Since India is the largest economy, the threat perception of the small neighbouring states has withered with the advent of SAARC, which tries to establish a more balanced trade relations with these countries. The nuclearisation of India and Pakistan has added an instrument of fear for the small countries but at the same time there is a kind of nuclear parity.

It is clear that the Post-Cold war scenario has not led to any major changes relating to South Asia<sup>1</sup> and also the relation of China with this region. The crucial issues still persist in a way that “ South Asia has the most contested territorial demarcations in the world, with Kashmir the key territory under dispute”<sup>2</sup>. These problems create instability and raise the expenditure of defense. Specially for big countries such as India and China, it has a decisive impact on the per capita income and also poses setback for raising the living standards of the people.

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<sup>1</sup> Grinter Lawrence E. , “The United States and South Asia: New Challenges, New Opportunities”, *Asian Affairs* ( New York), Vol 20, No. 3, Spring 1993, p.101

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, p.102

What happened in the last decade in South Asia should be defined as a normalisation in some key aspects. India has solved some important disputes with Bangladesh and Sri Lanka which contributed to the improvement of their relations but this was also due to domestic (political) changes that took place in these countries. The situation with Pakistan also reflected important ups and downs with an escalation of tension in 1999: the Kargil war and the military coup. With respect to Nepal, the differences of the past still persists although with less tension. India's policy towards Bhutan is related to the domestic developments in the small country.

Therefore, India's role in South Asia, if it has not started yet, is going to change in a short time when SAARC become more effective and the economic conditions and other social factors improve. India, as the biggest economy, is crucial for the development of the rest of the SAARC countries. They will begin to consider India differently, as a balance to maintain peace and security in the region.

South Asia is the natural space for India and when an external power presents itself in the region it would be described as anti-Indian. Chinese relations with South Asian countries during the sixties onwards were mainly anti-Indian. "China aligned itself with Pakistan and the small neighbouring states of Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bangladesh to undermine India's attempts to establish its regional predominance in South Asia."<sup>3</sup>The arms sales to these countries were made on special conditions of payment to create a close relationship, even in essentially anti-communist governments such as Sri Lanka, to promote the revolutionary cause.<sup>4</sup> The only threat was presumed to be India and this also continues today. As Swaran Singh notes: "India remains the

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<sup>3</sup> Mohan Malik J, "India's Relations with China Post- Soviet Union: Less Cooperation, More Competition" in Stuart Harris & Gary Klintworth (eds.), *China as a great power: myths, realities and challenges in the Asia-Pacific region* (New York, 1995), p. 132

<sup>4</sup>Alka Acharya, "China's arms sales: The fulcrum of its South Asia Policy", *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), Vol. XV, No 2, May 1992, p. 152

single most decisive factor in determining China's policy initiatives and objectives vis-à-vis South Asia"<sup>5</sup>. Other domestic factors are also relevant such as the case of Sri Lanka, but mainly as he says "China's South Asia policy has been guided purely by its security considerations"<sup>6</sup>. There is a game of encirclement of India by Beijing and this has not ended with the end of the Cold War ; in fact this has acquired a new dimension now.

India faces a more unstable scenario because of Kashmir which is a very sensitive problem, as has been witnessed in the small Kargil war during May, 1999. Kashmir is one of the major reasons of India's expenditure in defense ( because of border security). India is concentrating in projecting its area of influence mainly in South Asia through SAARC and that can be interpreted as to be confined in this region without other aspirations. This is one of Chinese interests too because both the countries can pursue hegemonic rivalries in different regions of Asia and more than never before, China wants to confine India's to South Asia in order not to 'disturb' its relations with other countries.

#### **\*Sri Lanka and Bangladesh**

It is true that because of its specific location, South Asia is essentially under the predominance of India<sup>7</sup>. As a major power India can exercise its influence on these small countries and make them more dependent, in particular the case of Sri Lanka or Maldives that are at a distance from other countries. Also, because of their

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<sup>5</sup> Swaran Singh, "Sino-South Asian ties: Problems & Prospects", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. XXIV, No 1, April 2000 p.34

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, p. 32

<sup>7</sup> "the predominance of India has drawn New Delhi into a strategy of attempting to deny the smaller nations of the region their relationship with distant powers in an endeavour to place a *cordon sanitaire* around South Asia and thus preserve Indian predominance". Sandy Gordon, *India's Rise to Power; in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, ( New York, 1995), p. 268

small size and economic conditions, these countries are essentially weak. This weakness can be described in two ways: as a threat to them and as threat to India itself.

Sri Lanka illustrates this kind of relationship very well. As Ranganathan and Khanna point out: “ the strategic importance of Sri Lanka to India is totally out of proportion to its size”<sup>8</sup>. Although a small country, Sri Lanka is strategically located in the South with the Palk Strait which divides it from India. Countries like United States and China try to get the benefit of using its ports, which results in a very sensitive security issue to India. But now the Colombo regime has signed a treaty with India which stipulates not allowing certain uses of its ports.

China’s policy of military sales in the sixties and in the seventies was to guarantee their independence from the big neighbour interfering in the Indo-Sri Lankan relations in as well as in India’s relations with Bangladesh. The objective was to create a kind of “ encirclement”<sup>9</sup> of India to keep it isolated from the rest. It was a major supplier during the Cold War period and this trend continued in the nineties but as some scholars point out, the objective is qualitatively different: “ the nature of the arms supplied is a requirement for dealing with domestic violences”<sup>10</sup>. The Tamil separatism is one of the most acute problems which made Sri Lanka distrust India but it is also true that Chinese, in its policy to support revolutionary movements in the developing countries supplied arms in the island to both the sides in the island.

This situation of the Chinese arms support is a source of irritation to India but at a certain point it has to be contemplated as a natural policy of an independent

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<sup>8</sup> Ranganathan C. V and V. C Khanna, *India and China, The way ahead . After “ Mao’s India war”*(New Delhi, 2000), p. 124

<sup>9</sup> Swaran Singh, n. 5, p. 41

<sup>10</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p.123

country. If Sri Lanka balances its interests, India is always going to enjoy the first place because Sri Lanka will not “ accord China facilities directed against India”<sup>11</sup>. The small country cannot have any guarantee from Beijing to take an active position against India. Sri Lanka cannot play a similar role as Pakistan.

One of the major fears that India has to face in South Asia is the Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean and the use of countries such as Myanmar and Bangladesh to achieve these goals. The military relations between China and these countries are a matter of concern for the government of New Delhi. Specially, it is reported the large supply of arms to these countries is made by Beijing. In the case of Bangladesh, “presently, China is a major arms supplier to her”<sup>12</sup>.

Bangladesh soon changed its gratitude for Indian support in the independence for Chinese military ‘aid’. After 1975, when military rule was installed, Bangladeshi nationalism was developed essentially as *anti-Indian*.<sup>13</sup> Sino- Bangladesh collaboration started after the former recognised this country<sup>14</sup> in spite of the hard criticism of Indian role in 1971. The relations between India and the regime of Dhaka had to face major problems related to sensitive issues such as refugees and the sharing of natural resources, mainly the Ganga waters. After Bangladesh gained democracy, the situation has improved substantially. For instance, a treaty between both the countries was signed on “ 12 December, 1996, to resolve the dispute over the sharing of the Ganga waters” affirming that mutual dialogue is becoming central to deal with these neighbours<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p. 124

<sup>12</sup> Suchita Ghosh, *China, Bangladesh, India Tangle today: Towards a solution?* (New Delhi : 1995), p. 94

<sup>13</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p. 128

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p.119

<sup>15</sup> *ibid*, p. 121

The Indo-Bangladesh relations in the last decade were not free from conflict which made the government of Dhaka perceive India as a rival in the dispute of the New Moore island or even the issue related to the exploration of oil and gas in the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh considered that India did not respect the maritime boundaries and for instance, was a threat to its security. In such a situation, Bangladesh felt that its interests clashed with its neighbour's ones and in that situation it was logical to maintain an ally in the region. But at the same time, Dhaka had its own evaluations of the conditions of the post- Cold War scenario in which China has emerged as an extraordinary power, as a third power after the United States or Russia. Bangladesh has realized its dependence on India in security and development matters<sup>16</sup>, as China does not go beyond notional support, that is, China will never commit in case of potential conflict with Bangladesh.

#### **\*Pakistan**

Islamabad is the 'third party' in the dangerous triangle of India-China-Pakistan. Also, Pakistan is a potential power in the context of South Asia, and it already possesses nuclear power. China perceives it as a possible ally country to counterbalance Indian power in South Asia when it was isolated by the USSR. The collaboration with Pakistan was one of the most permanent and stable one in the history of international relations. Moreover, China did not face any problem maintaining a relationship with a country which was strengthening ties with the western bloc, specially the United States. Maybe Islamabad played a role in the Sino-US normalisation in the early seventies.

Although many scholars subscribe to the Sino-Pakistan relationship as 'against' India, this can be debatable, at least in the nineties. The main objective is not

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<sup>16</sup> Suchita Ghosh, n.12, p. 93



only New Delhi. First of all, after the Cold War period, Beijing has initiated a strategy of gaining presence in the international arena. China started to collaborate with organisations such as ASEAN that it never could imagine two decades before. Chinese multipolar perception of the new order facilitates the dialogue with other powers, mainly outside of the region but at the same time, it tries to undermine India's power in the subcontinent. This is one of the reasons why both the countries do not take serious initiatives at security level<sup>17</sup>. Nevertheless, the improvement of Sino-Indian relations has not affected China's good relations with the regime of Islamabad<sup>18</sup>. Indian scholars think that this relation did not benefit<sup>19</sup> China because the costs were too high and Pakistan was weaker than India (as a result of the conflicts which took place during last three decades). It can be said to be true that the Indian factor was decisive in establishing the Islamabad-Beijing 'alliance' during the Cold War period, among other issues. However, in the nineties, the nature of such relation has experimented some strategic changes.

In fact, China has in Pakistan a possible friend to facilitate its relations with the Islamic world, which are becoming increasingly important in the Chinese agenda (China has made some efforts to improve its relations with Iran and other countries such as Saudi Arabia specially during last decade). Also, Pakistan enjoys an easy access to western technology<sup>20</sup> from countries such as Germany and United States which are of interest to China. Another important factor is the cultural links of the muslim population of Xingiang and its neighbour. This is particularly relevant for

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<sup>17</sup> Although there is an agreement between India and China "to initiate a security dialogue between the two countries" which is considered "a major diplomatic achievement". Anil Joseph Chandy, "India, China and Pakistan", in Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Matoo (eds), *The Peacock and the Dragon: India-China Relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, (New Delhi, 2000), p.329

<sup>18</sup> Ranganthan and Khanna, n. 8, p. 142

<sup>19</sup> Anil Joseph Chandy, n. 7, 301

<sup>20</sup> *ibid.*, 327

Beijing because a changing attitudes on Kashmir issue is related to the perception of their own problem. In this sense, China's 'new' interest on Pakistan has broadened its dimensions and this relation is more related to strategical reasons rather than the security ones, although the latter ones have not disappeared still. China needs to keep an ally in the region which is not very strong but not so weak as to confront India. India and China consider themselves to be at the same level and that is the reason why they do not rely on each other.

China is not going to sacrifice its relation with Pakistan to approach India and also it is not desirable for their cause. Beijing has started to shift its attitude from the open support of Pakistan in the Kashmir issue ( specially emphasised by the Chinese leaders in the middle of the last decade) to a proposal of bilateral dialogue. This can be very useful to establish a permanent dialogue between Islamabad and New Delhi, that is, China can play a role in alleviating the tension in Kashmir, but for its own interest.

India and China share some similar perceptions about some doctrines that rule the international relations. For example, both the countries always support the non-intervention<sup>21</sup> in domestic affairs, and are against the growing western ( particularly North American) interference in many intra-state conflicts. This is in relation with their strict sense of respect for the state's sovereignty. Also, there are other factors like domestic politics, in the case of China it is Tibet, and of India, Kashmir. The bilateralism is crucial for understanding the foreign policy of these countries.

Beijing should be afraid of a foreign intervention in Kashmir because of strategic reasons and also for its own internal stability ( mainly in Tibet). China has

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<sup>21</sup> "Such a trend points to China's continued fear of having the dispute resolved through the mediation of external powers who might thus gain influence in China's immediate neighbourhood", Joseph Anil Chandy, n. 7, p. 310

the American tacit agreement that the United States recognises only one China (related to Taiwan) but the North American lobbies are very active in supporting the Tibetan cause. In this sense, Kashmir is a very sensitive issue that has to be managed carefully. Otherwise, the precedent of Kashmir problem would be spread all over Asia, that is, if a conflict takes place in which China could be involved alongwith Pakistan, these would attract other major powers to support India and it would escalate the conflict.

Since the eighties, some declarations have been made by the Chinese leaders advocating a bilateral solution and this has become more strong after the Kargil war in the summer of 1999<sup>22</sup>. Other important reason is that India and Pakistan are now nuclear powers and an armed conflict between both the countries would be a setback which would affect the rest of Asian countries in economic as well as others terms.

China is also involved in the Kashmir conflict since Pakistan ceded 2700 square miles<sup>23</sup> to this country in 1963 when they settled their borders, although this territory is in the area claimed by India. This is particularly a sensitive problem since it involves Pakistan's capacity to settle a border in a region which was legally under dispute. Although it is possible that China will never give up this territory but it is not one of the main reasons behind its anti-Indian attitude 'against' to exercise its role on that area as some authors point out<sup>24</sup>. The core of the Chinese perception is the fear of an India extremely self-confident and strong such as the policy practised during the Indira Gandhi period which can undermine Beijing's own aspirations in the international arena.

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<sup>22</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p. 146-147

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p. 137

<sup>24</sup> Sondhi M. L., Prakash Nanda, *Vajpayee foreign policy: Daring the irreversible*, (New Delhi, 1999), p.100

In 1999, two important events took place in Pakistan: the Kargil war and the coup of Musharraf in October. Chinese reactions to these incidents showed a cautious stand. "During the Kargil conflict China called for an end to hostilities and respect for the Line of Control (LoC)"<sup>25</sup>. Also, Beijing was not sure of how the events developed in Pakistan after Musharraf took control. The doubt was dispelled when the dictator visited China and both the countries decided to continue their relations in the same manner as before.

If it is true that China will not break its ties with Pakistan in order to normalize relations with India, it is also important to note that India has now become a factor of stability that China needs because the main objective is to deal with New Delhi's government in order to keep stability in South Asia. "India's agreement with China, to initiate a security dialogue between the two countries, was believed to be a major diplomatic achievement"<sup>26</sup>. Due to their different stands on the nuclear issue, primarily, both the countries should be concerned with restrictive policies to reduce the tension in this geographical area.

Although China was a major factor of distrust, because of Pakistan, it has now become a reason for India to improve relations with the regime of Islamabad or viceversa. India is a very reluctant observer of the new political situation in this country. But dealing with China unilaterally will only serve to maintain distance from Pakistan which, instead will facilitate the Sino-Pak military collaboration.

It is not possible for India to stop Chinese military and nuclear assistance to Pakistan although this is the main security factor. The conditions will change when China realises that relaxing the tension in the region is also beneficial. In this sense,

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<sup>25</sup> *Frontline*( Chennai), 15-28 April 2000, Vol 17, No 8, 2000 p. 112-113

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Anil Chandy, n.7 p. 329

China is not only the main factor of stability for India but also for Pakistan. China's own decision to play a central role in the Post Cold war period is affecting the examination of its policies in the immediate neighbourhood.

#### **\*The Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan**

After China occupied Tibet and India incorporated Sikkim in 1975<sup>27</sup>, the buffer area between the two big countries lies in two small states which have particular characteristics. Bhutan and Nepal maintain the stability in the Himalayas but it is important to see the way they manage their affairs, with India or China as they seek benefits from both the southern and northern neighbours. It could be said that their attempts are successful.

The example of Bhutan is quite evident. As a British protectorate, the small theocratic kingdom was never considered in the same manner as an Indian princely state and when India got the independence, the same status also was guaranteed to Bhutan. Both the countries signed a treaty in 1949 where Bhutan is recognized as a sovereign state although its foreign policy is guided by India.

Nepal faces a similar situation although its domestic affairs have been much more turbulent till democracy was re-established in the beginning of the nineties. It had signed a Treaty of Peace and Friendship in August 1950<sup>28</sup> with India concerned with its security, and India, in a certain way, become responsible for the security of the kingdom. The changing political situation in the country made its relations unstable with New Delhi in some periods. This is due to particular dynamics to preserve their integrity and independence.

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<sup>27</sup> Mohan Malik J,n. 3, p 148. The author points out that: " Sikkim was annexed by the Indira Gandhi government in 1975 to bolster India's defences *vis-à-vis* China"

<sup>28</sup> Lal Babu Yadav, *Indo-Bhutan Relations and China interventions*, ( New Delhi, 1996), p.57

Both Bhutan and Nepal try to play a policy of equal distance from New Delhi and Beijing so that it guarantees their independence and also stability. Another important factor is their viability to survive in that particular geopolitical context surrounded by big countries. There is a basic difference in how they manage their relations with India and China. On one side, Bhutan is more reluctant to play China's card against India because in its history Chinese were suspicious about domestic crises in the country. In the case of Nepal, this country did not have problems to 'go to China' when the relations with New Delhi were not favourable. Even today, the Indo-Nepalese relations, though friendly, have a component of distrust due to the game between the big power (India) and the small country which wants to preserve its independence (defined by opposition). One example which can illustrate this in the Indo-Nepal relations was the low level reached last December when the hijacking of a plane of Indian Airlines in the Kathmandu -Delhi route took place.

India's policy towards these two countries is guided to its security policy in the Himalayas formulated by Nehru and it has not been substantially changed during the following decades. The only fact that could be underlined is that India, in order to normalise its relations with China, has accepted a broad space for these countries to deal with the northern neighbour considering this relationship as natural and not directed against it.

In the case of China, with the occupation of Tibet there were some claims about other Tibetan Buddhist areas, namely Bhutan, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh but with time it could not be said that this country wanted to expand its borders to the south. It is true that, because of strategic reasons, China wants to gain influence in Nepal and Bhutan but its policy has softened with respect to the previous decades.

Now, there is no emphasis to preserve their own sovereignty *against* the southern neighbour, India. It is much more feasible to develop a bilateral relationship.

With respect to Bhutan, India has a much more close relationship which is facilitated by China's territorial claims in the small country. The border issue between Bhutan and China has experimented ups and down but at least the contested territory has been reduced to almost 300 square kilometers<sup>29</sup>. Twelve rounds of talks have been held since the eighties but the problem is still pending. The major achievement of the Chinese government has been to hold bilateral conversations<sup>30</sup> with the Bhutanese directly, avoiding India's participation. "China, (...), always laid stress that the border dispute between China and Bhutan would be discussed directly between the two countries without any interference the two countries"<sup>31</sup>. Therefore, there is still an additional factor that should be considered, that India also has to intervene in the trilateral areas.

In India's security perceptions, Bhutan is an important matter of concern due to several reasons. First of all, the Bhutanese armed force is primitive and will not be able to defend the territorial integrity of the country in case of external aggression. It is inferred that this territorial area is vulnerable regarding India's security. The second aspect is its strategic location in the northeast of the Indian territory. In this sense, "strengthening of the defence of Bhutan's border with China is vital for the security of the eastern region of India"<sup>32</sup> and also, dealing with the border issue, "if China is successful in obtaining some territorial concessions from Bhutan, particularly close to

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<sup>29</sup> Lal Babu Yadav, n.28 p. 60

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p. 7. These conversations started in 1984 and still continue because there is no any agreement for the settlement of the border.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p. 59

<sup>32</sup> Manorama Kohli, *From dependency to interdependence, A study of Indo-Bhutan relations*, (New Delhi, 1993), p. 168

the trijunction in the Chumbi Valley where the boundaries of India, Bhutan and China meet, this will have adverse effects on the security interests of India”<sup>33</sup> .

. Bhutan’s security perceptions are affected by the past developments in its immediate neighbourhood. China’s incorporation of Tibet was seen with distrust because the kingdom was also a Buddhist country which could fall in the Chinese sphere of influence. In a same way, India’s accession of Sikkim, where there was a inversion in the population from the Buddhist native people to the Nepali majority, was another factor of cautious management of its relations with New Delhi. This is the attitude to remain landlocked geographically and politically because apart from the foreign threats, there are the domestic ones against the feudal monarchy. For these reasons, Bhutan is suspicious of both the big neighbours and also it does not enjoy cordial relations with Nepal.

Bhutan is reluctant to place Indian army personnel in the northern borders with China but at the same time fears of the movements of the latter. For example, “the Bhutanese government had informed the National Assembly, in 1996, that the Chinese were constructing roads and carrying out logging operations in the disputed area”<sup>34</sup>. Because of this unstability both the countries ( Bhutan and China) have signed an agreement<sup>35</sup> in 1998 in a similar way like the 1993 Sino-Indian treaty to keep peace and tranquility along the border but it has not taken any concrete steps to make these measures effective.

Nepal is significantly bigger than Bhutan and also more problematic to Indian and Chinese security parameters. New Delhi’s relations with this country have been oscillating from a broad consensus in the fifties to a serious disagreement, when in

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<sup>33</sup> Manormama Kohli, n.32, p. 169

<sup>34</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p. 116

<sup>35</sup> *ibid*, p. 116



1975 the small kingdom advocated for the declaration of Nepal as a Zone of Peace with Chinese approval. China's perceptions on Nepal were made on the basis of preserving its security in Tibet<sup>36</sup>. During the fifties, China complained of the use of Nepali soil by the CIA to destabilize Tibet.

With the same intentions but with different contents, India and Nepal signed a Treaty in 1950 where both the countries came closer to their strategic security perceptions. Compared to Bhutan, Nepal was more "independent" from India and for this reason there are no statements in the treaty regarding its foreign policy. What India wanted is that the Nepalese security be designed against third parties, not India, India controlled the import of arms to this country made through the Indian territory. New Delhi wanted to avoid that China did the same "against India". The problem came when "in 1988 Nepal bought arms from China violating the understanding reached between India and Nepal on arms supplies through 1950 Treaty and 1965 Agreement. Nepal can buy arms from other sources but it used China to counter the Indian influence"<sup>37</sup>.

Apart from this, another factor that India always was afraid of was the presence of Chinese personnel doing projects in Nepal in areas near to the Indian border. This attitude irritated New Delhi government since the Sino- Indian relations improved during the nineties, India is "turning blind eyes to many Chinese projects that have cropped up in the Indo-Nepalese border"<sup>38</sup>.

The normalisation of Sino-Indian relations have been a factor for improving Indo-Nepalese relations because Nepal cannot appeal to the Chinese as before. One

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<sup>36</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 8, p.110

<sup>37</sup> Sangeeta Thapliyal, *Mutual security arrangements. The case of India-Nepal*, IDSA,( New Delhi, 1998), p.183

<sup>38</sup> Mahendra Lama, "Nepal and Bhutan".in *Security in South Asia* by Major General Dipankar Banerjee( ed), *Security in South Asia* (New Delhi, 1999), p. 197

example is the massive Indian aid to avoid Nepal going to China for assistance. The kingdom has also witnessed a significant relaxation in the tension between these two neighbours. “ The normalisation of relations between India and China also lessens the Indian anxiety towards any physical danger arising from the north and also lessens its sensitivity towards Nepal for its security interest”<sup>39</sup>.

Unlike Bhutan and India, border between Nepal and China was successfully demarcated and an agreement on this issue was signed in 1961 and this is an important point for the security parameters of the kingdom since it does not have any concrete dispute pending with the northern neighbour. What is more relevant is the process of differentiation or keeping equal distance with respect to India. Although Nepal is in the “Indian sphere”, it needs to maintain pragmatic relations with China as a medium of preserving its integrity and its sovereignty .

## **2.- A resume**

During the last decade, China has not adopted the former policy of creating disturbing situations directed to create an unstable scenario for India. China’s policy in South Asia was not continuous although it was always related to maintain India “in its place”. The Chinese policy with the South Asian countries with whom it does not share borders and who are immediate neighbours should be differentiated. Size and strategic aspects also define this influence.

China’s policy towards Sri Lanka and Bangladesh has no definite direction, it has concrete needs. It is true that the strategic position of the island attracts foreign interest such as happened during the Cold War but now this condition is only relevant for the India’s security. In case of Bangladesh, the situation is a little different because this country shares borders with Myanmar, where China is playing an important role.

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<sup>39</sup> Sangeeta Thapliyal , n. 37, p. 188

Pakistan is one of the security axis for the improvement of Sino- Indian relations. New Delhi has got some “concessions” from Beijing dealing with Kashmir problem which is a territorial dispute but also a border problem where the interference of third parties, namely the role of Taliban terrorism, has being perceived as a major fear by China.

The shift in the Chinese perceptions on Kashmir and in South Asia can be observed within the context of the end of the Cold War and the absence of the supremacy of one of the big blocs located in Asia, the USSR. That is, China has accepted India as a partner to deal with and has accepted its role in South Asia (but, maybe confined to this region) although it is not clear whether China sees its big southern neighbour as “equal” in terms of security.

China’s military and nuclear interests are not clear but it seems that it does not have territorial ambitions in South Asia. Its claims do not go beyond consolidating its position in Tibet but it wants to preserve a kind of *status quo* in the Himalayas, specially in case of any serious domestic affair in Nepal and Bhutan. China does not rely on India’s ambitions in this area and for that reason is quite reluctant to recognize Sikkim. This region is not a part of the border dispute but a problem of geostrategic influence.

The normalisation of Sino-Indian relations has also affected the relations of India and the other South Asian countries, specially the Himalayan states who cannot exploit antagonistic rivalries but they also enjoy much more stability in the exercise of their sovereignty. The climate of tension which could be seen in the past has been minimised. Notwithstanding this, there is not any specific change in the existing conflicts in the region.

What India is watching carefully are the Chinese developments in Myanmar and Bangladesh with respect to its aspirations in the Indian Ocean, is the ocean of South Asia. The Andaman and Nicobar islands have strategic importance for India. This can create a clash with the Chinese presence in the area. Also, China's collaboration with Bangladesh is a serious concern due to several reasons such as the lack of economic strength and security imperatives. China's border with India is very close to Bangladesh, divided only by the narrow area of West Bengal. It could be desirable for the Chinese aspirations to reach the sea in the south.

India's major security problems remain the same in South Asia. In this sense, it can be said that China is practising an expansionist policy based on economic grounds but with security and strategic objectives: this is the case with Myanmar and the claims in South China Sea. The nineties is a decade of accommodation to the new realities for Beijing's regime. This country has softened its attitude but its foreign policy remains the same. The policy of encirclement of India is still the policy of China and it had adopted a more strategic vision after the Cold War period.

***Chapter 4. India and China in the context of Asian security***

***1.- Asia and the Post- Cold War scenario***

***2.- India and China: factors of change and continuity***

***\*The case of Myanmar***

***\*The rest of Southeast Asian countries***

***\*Central Asia***

***3.- Confrontation vs cooperation***

## 1.-Asia and the Post- Cold War scenario

Although it is not the aim of this research work to analyse the Post-Cold War period, it is important to note some aspects that have an impact on international relations from now onwards. At the outset, it is necessary to distinguish the present period from the past and, to note the differences. The Cold War period was characterised by the bipolarity, by the economic division *communism vs capitalism* and by the race for armaments. During the last decade, this pattern of defining the international relations became predominant.

From bipolarity now there is the discussion between *unipolarity* (United States domination) and *multipolarity* (as multiple centres of power). In the field of economy the defeat of communism is clear and there is only one economic model. The military issue now becomes crucial to understand the changes and strategies that are taking place in Asia, in particular, in the areas of influence of the countries here analysed, that is, India and China. It could be inferred that the new international order is characterised by the predominance of the United States but its becoming increasingly multipolar because other countries want to break the North American dominance.

The logic of the Cold War period was to be under the 'umbrella' of the two big superpowers in order to get protection, similar to a feudal manner. These two superpowers were at the top of the armament race and nuclear field and no other country could even dream to be closer to them. Their expenditure in defense was high and it was related to modernization and high-tech capabilities than to produce just quantity. Also it is relevant to say that military power was isolated of economic power. Now it is not possible to separate the economic and security dimensions. The use of economic power in order to dissuade certain policies or attitudes of another

country has become central. One of the major examples is the Sino-U.S. relations in this period.

But the arms security still did not lose its perspective. With the end to the US or Soviet 'help' in case of conflict, many countries have had to re-define their own security parameters. Asia did not escape these changes and the current geostrategical scenario has links with what is called Post-Cold war order 'or disorder'. What was evident was the existence of a *vacuum* in this continent after the game of alliances played by the former Soviet Union and the United States had ended. This *vacuum* could be filled by regional powers and China was the first and with the best credentials, to do so.

In Asia there is now an important 'new' geopolitical space, the Central Asian republics which is a result of the disintegration of USSR. Although they are neighbours with different Islamic regimes (Taliban, Ayatollahs,..) their basic form of state is secular and democratic. These countries are very rich in resources which is a source of attraction to external third powers such as the United States. The US, in order to exploit and transport the Turkmenistan oil via Pakistan, indirectly supported the Taliban regime instead of through Iran or Iraq (hostile regimes).

In spite of many domestic problems that China faces, they do not have a strong effect on the structures of the state. Unlike the former USSR, where the reforms were very late, China, through Deng Xiaoping knew how to adapt to the changing scenario. The economic situation helped to legitimize the regime but the question is for how long. Tiananmen experience in 1989 was a demand for democratic rights and it looked for international support, but the countries which strongly criticised China, changed their attitude in order to ignore the incident.

China now enjoys a better position in the international community than ever before. Pragmatism has replaced ideology and it helped the survival of the regime if compared with other communist countries such as North Korea and Cuba. Also it is important to point out that China tried to distance itself from these countries, specially the good relationship shared with the Pyongyang regime in the past. In the neighbouring areas, China tries to gain influence participating in fora such as ASEAN and to improve relations with traditional hostile neighbours such as Vietnam.

India's immediate scenario in the nineties did not see many relevant changes. If China's foreign policy is termed as pragmatic, the Indian one can be called independent<sup>1</sup>. This independence has a positive and negative dimension. The positive side is the capacity to take its own decisions without external interference, specially by stable alliances. India many times opposed the decisions taken by the hegemonic powers because it was not beneficial for the country. Also it raised the voice of the Third World on many issues, such as in the WTO, the transference of high-technology to developing countries, the sharing of resources, etc.

The negative dimension is that 'independent' does not mean 'powerful' or it is not co-related to benefits. India never elaborated a doctrine in order to guide its external affairs and in this sense in fifty years of independence it did not know how to improve the relations with the immediate neighbourhood. It's image in South Asia is still hegemonic and the smaller states look towards other countries in order to get some kind of protection. Relationship with Pakistan has not changed substantially and it oscillates. When in early 1999 the Lahore Declaration took place in a atmosphere of

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<sup>1</sup> "The focus of our national security thinking has, in fact, markedly shifted from making decisions on the basis of high sounding moral principles towards defining and achieving hard core national interests", Swaran Singh, "Post-Cold War Order and India's national security, *Strategic Analysis* (New Delhi), Vol. XVIII, No 5, July 1995, p.527



euphoria, some months later the Kargil war was a setback creating a new phase of hostility between the two countries.

The Indo-Pak rivalry also affects India's relations with the Islamic world, something that India has to deal with a very sensitive manner because of its significant muslim population. When the communal riots took place in the aftermath of Ayodhya mosque, the Islamic world criticised India very strongly and took some measures such as deporting hindu workers there. Though the only country which whom it enjoyed a good relationship, Iraq, was defeated in the Gulf war, during this conflict, India allowed the United States the use of the Mumbai base for its aircraft.

With respect to the Sino- Indian relations at the end of the Cold War, one could point out that the Post- Cold War period started in Asia a little earlier than the rest of the world. In december 1988 Rajiv's Gandhi visit to China broke the ice between the two countries when during his sojourn some concrete steps were taken in order to improve the relationship. Three treaties were signed and Joint Working Groups were set up to deal with the border issue.

After a long period of distance China faced a relaxation in its contacts with Gorbachev's Soviet Union . India saw an opportunity to approach its neighbour and to counterbalance the situation of the double-front hostility from Pakistan and China. At the same time, the Beijing regime was confronting new challenges. In 1997 and 1999 China gained the colonial possessions of Honk Kong and Macao respectively but the problem that is still pending is of Taiwan. China had an interest to shift the attention from the South to the Southeast.

Beijing focusses on an economic modernization process trying to solve the imbalances created by the early policies of Deng Xiaoping such as the disparities

between the coastal areas and the interior or rising the low GNP. For that purpose, it has gained the support of the United States inspite of their differences and seeks membership of the WTO in spite of North American criticism of violation of intellectual property rights. But this view contrasts with the modernization of the naval programme and its claims and incursions in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. An innocent image of this country is not appropriate if the history of China's strategy is serving its own interest at a long term period.

## **2.- India and China: factors of change and continuity**

As an alternative, these two big countries have adopted a programme of economic modernization with liberalization policies in the early nineties. "Economic security has gradually emerged as a significant component of India's national security perceptions"<sup>2</sup>. In the case of China it is more evident because its foreign policy is primarily projected on the basis of domestic objectives, these are, the economic modernization and the reducing of disparities between the regions<sup>3</sup>.

The economic dimension has become more important in the nineties but the question is how can the basic points of difference be solved. First of all, there is a consensus in both the countries that economic cooperation helps to relax the tension and creates better conditions for solving controversies. At least this is the message in the agreements signed by both the countries during Li Peng's visit to India in 1991 and during the visit of Narasimha Rao to China in September 1993.

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<sup>2</sup> Swaran Singh, n.1, p. 526

<sup>3</sup> Quansheng Zhao, "Patterns and Choices in China's foreign policy", *Asian Affairs*(New York ), Vol. 20, No 1, Spring 1993, p. 8

Secondly, it is necessary to take into consideration the source of the economic security conflict. This is due to several reasons such as competition in the economic field, bid to get support from other countries and also as a reinforcement of security in military terms. China and India are very big markets but they will try to expand their economies and for that reason they need to broaden their areas of influence in which a clash of interests is possible and this can be added to the existing unsolved security problems.

Some scholars see the closer cooperation between India and China as a guarantee of Asian stability and peace<sup>4</sup> but as it has been said before, the major factors of instability have not changed and for that reason, a harmonious vision without problems is a bit doubtful. Arm race is still a pending issue and in the nineties had become central after the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan . As the alliance between Moscow- New Delhi to counterbalance China-Pakistan ties has disappeared, the triangle of China-Pakistan-India becomes dangerous. At least till there is enough evidence that Beijing is distancing itself from the regime of Islamabad.

In fact, some of the differences that arise in the relations between India and China are due to the sharing of areas of influence. Usually big countries have a vital role in maintaining a balance in a particular region, such as the case of India in South Asia. This influence can be called 'hegemonic' but it is something that cannot be avoided, otherwise a external power would take over this role. Specially if one big country is surrounded by small or economic or military states it has to preserve its

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<sup>4</sup>Ma Jiali, "India's China Policy after the Cold War" in Shen Bhabani Sen Gupta (eds), *China looks at the world*, ( New Delhi, 1999), p.250

security through these countries because their stability is also a matter of concern for the former.

China's involvement in South Asia since the sixties was due to strategic reasons more than to develop a friendly collaboration with those countries. Compared to Southeast Asia, where some of these countries enjoyed the support of the United States and a situation of balance was maintained in South Asia China had no rival to exploit anti-Indian feelings. The vulnerability of the conditions of the South Asian countries was very different from the situation of Vietnam or even Indonesia and in the West, China's movements were "stopped" by the USSR.

Similarly India never could or wanted to repeat the same with China, with the exception of the alliance with the Soviet Union during the Cold War period. After the emergence of the Central Asian republics, India did not actively project its interests in the region, at least not in such a dynamic manner as Beijing. Only the relations with Iran have improved due to the differences of this country with Pakistan concerning the Taliban regime.

The external big powers such as Russia and the United States are changing their strategy in the region due to different reasons. Russia's approach to China and India is made on the basis of creating a big Asian alliance as a response to the western dominance. China has become the major destiny of Russian high-tech arms and qualified personnel. With respect to India, both the countries have signed an agreement in defence planning. The problem of the Russian perception is that it does not take into consideration China's aspirations, that is, China wants to be the sole hegemonic power in Asia within a multipolar world. Beijing has gained enough

confidence to behave like this and does not show special interest for the Russian neighbour.

Although some scholars such as Lawrence Grinter say that the nineties have created a better atmosphere for an Indo-US approach in particular fields such as market economics<sup>5</sup> and also in defence (both the countries signed an agreement in defence cooperation in 1995), there are important gaps particularly related to nuclear proliferation<sup>6</sup>. India's nuclear tests have strongly been criticised because of the fear of escalating proliferation in other Asian countries as Iran and Iraq<sup>7</sup>. At the same time, the United States can benefit by the Sino-Indian rivalry but it cannot play a major role in the region as it did during the Cold War period.

Also it is relevant to point out that in the nuclear issue, China and the United States share common perceptions. China signed the NPT in 1992 but still continued to give nuclear support to the Pakistani programme ignoring the treaties. The American stand is to improve economic relations in order to reduce the arms race in the region but this is most favourable to China's global aspirations<sup>8</sup>. China has much more weight in the international community compared to India because of its permanent membership to the Security Council.

American policy towards India is strictly related to its stand on Pakistan but during the last decade some changes took place. The United States' arms sale to Pakistan was to support the Taliban movement, to destabilize Afghanistan creating a more favourable

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<sup>5</sup> Grinter Lawrence, "The United States and South Asia: New Challenges, New Opportunities", *Asian Affairs*, Vol 20, No. 2, Summer 1993, p 112

<sup>6</sup> Gordon Sandy, *India's rise to power in the Twentieth Century and Beyond*, (New York., 1995), p.259

<sup>7</sup> *ibid*, p.259

<sup>8</sup> Quansheng Zhao, n. 3, p.11

government and gain influence in Central Asia because of oil ( and the hostile regime of Iran). There was a shift in this policy since Afganistan is supporting international terrorism essentially anti-american. The 'new American Policy' is most favourable to India than Pakistan and it is mainly based on economic factors but at the military level there is disagreement between the two countries .

China is now in a better position to deal with the former superpowers<sup>9</sup> and other important powers and this serves to achieve its goals .But this will not change at least for a short term period<sup>10</sup>. Economic modernization has priority over the military but strategies in this field are also necessary. China does not face a big threat from external powers as a bilateral confrontation but the nature of its military modernization, specially the naval one, is responding to estrategic interests of "expansionism", in order to extend its influence to achieve certain objectives.

Mainly, its threats are limited to consolidation of national territory where Taiwan's re-unification is a major issue and disputes relating to gaining influence in the South China Sea that present some conflicts with the Southeast Asian countries. In fact, " the receding danger of a world war makes it possible for China to reduce its military forces but the potentiality of local military conflicts forces the Chinese army to improve its mobility and quality".<sup>11</sup>

What is particularly of concern to India is China's naval capabilities, comparatively better than the Indian and the collusion of interest in the Indian Ocean

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<sup>9</sup> "(in the P5 of the Security Council) China stands out as an independent centre of power, taking decisions on the basis of possibly different, and certainly non-western , criteria than the others", Mansingh Surjit, "Why China Matters to India?" in Kanti Bajpai and Amitabh Mattoo (eds.), *The Peacock and the Dragon: India: China relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century* ( New Delhi, 2000), p. 156

<sup>10</sup> *ibid*, p. 8

<sup>11</sup> Yan Xuetong, " China's Security after the Cold War", n. 3, p. 101

and in the South China Sea in a continuous area. Also, maybe the economic factor of the Chinese investment in some countries in the Southeast Asia region should be taken into consideration. Some countries such as Thailand or Malaysia have already perceived this fear, specially with the Chinese activities in Myanmar.

**\* The case of Myanmar**

In the nineties, Myanmar has become one of the axis of the Sino- Indian relations in the Indian Ocean. The country shares the form of regime, a dictatorship, and a similar strategical opening to the international economy with China Myanmar's policy is modernization through foreign investment but without civil liberties to its citizens. Myanmar shares historical links with India but the turbulent history of the country after the Second World War created a distance from New Delhi.

India has shifted the strategy towards this country in the same manner as to other South-East Asian countries, trying to improve economic ties in order to "extricate Myanmar from growing dependence on China"<sup>12</sup>. India is now the major exporter to this country during the last decade.

In fact, some authors point out that Myanmar has become a center of dispute between India and China in a similar way as the Cold War period policies of the superpowers<sup>13</sup>. Myanmar occupies a very sensitive location because it shares border with India in the northeast, connecting with the important border trade to the Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand, and it is the major Chinese aspiration to project its influence in the Indian Ocean<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Yan Xuetong, n.4, p 135

<sup>13</sup> Bhaskar Uday C., "Myanmar in the strategic calculus of India and China", n. 9, p. 349

<sup>14</sup> "Burma's riverine network and the opening to the Indian Ocean through its west coast abutting the Bay of Bengal have enormous significance as outlets for southwestern China, *ibid*, p. 334-5

It is a similar case as the South Asian countries, China is the major supplier of arms to Myanmar<sup>15</sup>, but the main issue that confronts the former with India is related to the naval bases on the Coco and Hianggyi islands. China has helped to equip these bases and “Beijing is alleged to have an agreement with Rangoon that the bases can be used by China’s blue water fleet staging into the Indian Ocean”<sup>16</sup> but the controversy has risen because the government of Myanmar denies such facilities<sup>17</sup>.

Although some authors such as Ranganathan and Khanna see these bases for the military use of China, this can be understood in the sense that China shows interest in enjoying a primary position along the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea through the Malacca Strait. Such a policy could be to destabilize the environment in the region. Although China’s strategy should be contextualized in a replacement of the presence of the great foreign powers ( as it happened during the Cold War) for the regional ones. India is also boosting its key role as a dominant country in the Indian Ocean.

India’s policy is concentrated in integrating this country in the dynamics of its natural region, South Asia, but in the long-term perspective.. In this task it has the support of the Southeast Asian countries because they share the same perceptions about China, although they have created important economic ties with the regime of Beijing.

#### **\* The rest of Southeast Asia**

This region has become more dynamic since the beginning of the nineties, because of their liberalization policies and the big markets that they represent. There is a harmonisation that breaks the existing uncertainty of the Cold War period. In this sense, the ASEAN has acquired a more flexible structure and has gained

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<sup>15</sup> Bhaskar Uday C., n. 9, p.305

<sup>16</sup> Sandy Gordon, n. 6, p. 305

<sup>17</sup> Ranganathan C. V. and V. C. Khanna, *India and China. The way ahead. After “Mao’s India War”* (New Delhi, 2000), p. 134



importance. The cooperation and participation of new members broadening the initial objectives as to when it was created in 1967<sup>18</sup>. The ASEAN has given participation to India and China<sup>19</sup> as observers in order to expand their trade and also to solve specific problems such as China claims in South China Sea.

China is highly interested in developing a better relationship with these countries and the “decisive impact on the economic, military, and political security of Northeast and Southeast Asia has become increasingly obvious and well-publicised by the international media in the 1990’s”<sup>20</sup>. For that purpose it is trying to maintain a distance from traditional allies such as North Korea and has initiated cooperation such as to provide a reactor to South Korea, strengthen relations with Singapore and trying to solve its differences with the traditional enemy, Vietnam. Also, “China’s participation was integral to negotiated settlements reached in Cambodia and North Korea”<sup>21</sup>.

Therefore, although the Beijing’s regime has been successful in dealing with these countries, its position is very sensitive because of territorial disputes and the issue of Taiwan. The incorporation of the island to the mainland without any discussion is the primary objective of the People’s Republic. The military exercises<sup>22</sup> that China indulged close to the island were a clear message that Taiwan’s independence will never be allowed and a military conflict can take place. With respect to this issue, China has the support of other countries such as the United States and Japan, or at least not apparent interference, after the shift of the United States’s stand advocating for “one China”<sup>23</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> Ranganathan and Khanna, n. 17., p. 125

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.126

<sup>20</sup> Surjit Mansingh, n. 9, p. 156

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, p. 156

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, p. 156

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, p. 161

Other major concerns are China's claim in the South China sea with the dispute of the Spratly and Paracel island groups<sup>24</sup>. Some Southeast Asian states such as Indonesia are very preoccupied because China's demands for the Exclusive Economic Zone includes its territorial waters rich in natural gas. The strategy of the countries concerned is to bring China to the round of negotiations. But this country adopts some 'aggressive' measures such as when " in February 1992 Beijing passed a law which had the effect of incorporating all the area of the claim into China's territory"<sup>25</sup>. Also, the participation of India as a counterbalance power is specially appreciated in countries such as Malaysia<sup>26</sup>. For that reason, India now enjoys an important role in the region helping it to gain influence that it can be very beneficial for its own interests.

In spite of Chinese differences on the territorial issues, it is necessary to underline the positive negotiations of the border dispute with Vietnam. Both the countries have had a minimum exchange of dialogue earlier. The major issue is solving the territorial border dispute although there are some different interpretations on the sea claims. In this sense, the two countries agreed in 1998 " to speed up talks so that the two nations can sign a land border treaty as well as delineate a bilateral boundary in the Tonkin Gulf by 2000"<sup>27</sup>.

With respect to India's links with this region, these were based on historical-cultural ties ( spread of Hinduism and then Buddhism). China enjoyed a better position because of geographical reasons. In this sense, it is sufficient to say that the last decade can be seen as the beginning of India's more active participation in

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<sup>24</sup> Ranganathan C. V. and C. V. Khanna, n. 17, p. 126

<sup>25</sup> Sandy Gordon, n. 6, p. 295

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, p. 295

<sup>27</sup> Ranganathan C. V. and C. V. Khanna, n. 17, p. 128

Southeastern affairs. It was a result of a mutual search where “ASEAN nations, Singapore and Malaysia have made most effort to advance relations with India”<sup>28</sup>

Apart from the ASEAN, India has improved relations with particular countries because of sharing a common perception the geostrategical level. This is the case of Malaysia and Thailand who fear the growing power of China. For instance, an agreement has been signed between the governments of India and Malaysia in 1993 “on military co-operation that opened the way for a wide range of joint activities in the areas of training and joint-production of military supplies”<sup>29</sup>.

Thailand is characterised for being quite distant and independent from China’s interests and is a crucial country in the new open economies of the Southeast mainland. Thailand is suspicious, alongwith India, of the Chinese intentions regarding Myanmar<sup>30</sup>. This situation can create instability in the sensitive borders that those countries share and is suspicious of the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean. But the economic compulsions have become central to strengthen their relations and during the time of Narasimha Rao government some agreements have been reached to increase their trade as a measure of protection vis-à- vis the Chinese growing economic power<sup>31</sup>.

India has approached Southeast Asia on an economic basis looking for markets to expand its trade in the same manner as China but, unlike this country, “India does not have territorial claims on any Southeast Asian country”<sup>32</sup>. For instance, it is in a better condition to improve ties with those countries and develop a natural relation. Mainly ASEAN countries cannot ignore both India and China as they

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<sup>28</sup> Sandy Gordon, n. 6, p. 297

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, p. 297

<sup>30</sup> *ibid*, p.298

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, p. 297-8

<sup>32</sup> Suryanarayan V, “ India and Southeast Asia in the 1990s” in Raman Pillai (ed) *India’s foreign policy in the 1990s* ( New Delhi., 1997), p.106

are big actors in Asia and their participation is essential to guarantee the stability in the region after the pro-western tilt during the Cold War period where the American influence dictated their designs.

### **\*Central Asia**

The emergence of the Central Asian republics after the disintegration of the USSR has brought new interest to this geopolitical space for India and China. Regarding China there are two major reasons: to maintain stability in the province of Sinkiang and because of economic imperatives. With the porous borders, there are some fundamentalist groups who want to spread their ideas and create divisions as it has happened in Tajikistan, where the *talibanization* effect has not been successful and has disturbed the emergent democracy. China, because of its communist regime, does not allow religious freedom. In Sinkiang there is the Uighur separatist movement that is gaining importance as it is facing the increasing repression by the Beijing's government. Terrorist activities are taking place creating a kind of challenge to the central state.

On the other hand it is interesting to note that besides Sinkiang and the Uighur movement, there is Tibet. Compared with the fifties, Tibet is now relatively quiet but it is the objective of the international public opinion when they want to criticise China and its policies. Today these regions, strategically located cannot oppose the central regime, where the power resides in a few hands. But China has to be careful in the management of the events in this vital area because one failure can open the doors of destabilization in the two regions.

The formation of new countries has added a new problem to the demarcation of borders because Beijing had to reach to agreements with Kyrgyzstan and

Kazakhstan instead of the negotiation with only one power as it happened before with the Soviet Union. It is particularly relevant that China is very keen to evolve close ties with the Muslim world, that can be very sensitive for India's interests. The reason is described as such by the scholar J. Mohan Malik : " India's key diplomatic objective in Central Asia is to prevent the formation of a pro-Pakistani, pro-Iranian pan- Islamic confederation based on common strategic and economic interests"<sup>33</sup>. New Delhi does not want other countries to join the Beijing and Islamabad's entente which can affect its domestic stability.

### **3.- Confrontation vs cooperation**

India and China's foreign policies in the nineties are taking into account, more than never before, the importance of their neighbouring regions and are opening channels with the rest of Asian countries, particularly those in South Asia and the Southeast in order to cooperate and get the benefits from it. Economic cooperation can be seen as a precondition of security.

At a regional level and at the continental (Asian) one, there is an interest to create a framework to boost the relationships between the concerned countries . For example, in South Asia, there is no precedent for SAARC, and this association for regional cooperation is changing the image that the rest of South Asian countries see of India. In the Southeast, the ASEAN invited both China and India to work with them. The purpose is to enrol them in a machinery of solution of collective problems that can be done at an individual level, and also, to avoid possible differences. At least, this is the way they perceive China. This country is the most attractive market but there is no democracy and because the way they hold Taiwan hostage or their

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<sup>33</sup> Mohan Malik J., "India's Relations with China Post- Soviet Union: Less Cooperation, More Competition" in *China as a great power: Myths, realities and challenges in the Asia- Pacific region*, Stuart Harris & Gary Klintworth (eds.) ( New York, 1995), p. 151

way of claiming territorial demands passing domestic laws in the assembly is a source of problems.

India has better relations with some Southeast Asian countries but this scenario is not its major concern. What is true is that China's action is also concentrated in the search for markets and Southeast Asia could be noted as an emergent region. In this sense, China's broad strategy to gain presence all over the continent but concentrating in the immediate scenario of Southeast Asia where regional economic powers are relevant (Japan, South Korea, Indonesia or Malaysia) should be taken into consideration. India's attitude is not so adventurous and although South Asia is a vital space there is a lack of competition because India enjoys a unique position. India has not shown in any significant manner as to how to adopt strategy towards West Asia, for example, and its concrete policies to improve relations with some countries (such as Israel) do not respond to any definite line.

China has other priorities besides India, though India is still an important concern. During this period, after the major powers reduced their presence in the Indian Ocean, there is a competition to 'fill the vacuum' between India and China along with the existence of the regional countries also. India is demanding this ocean as a natural space that was consistently denied to it. China is still silent about its objectives depending on how it solves its claims in the east.

One of the most affected and critical countries for China's interests is Indonesia, traditionally hostile to Beijing. Therefore, after the foreign intervention in the East Timor issue, Jakarta is approaching China in order to counterbalance the weak situation created by the pro-western support in Timor and the Australian presence.

It is possible that a reorganization of forces is going to take place in this scenario and both China and India will be present. What is seen, broadly speaking, is the foreign policies of the two respective big countries to look towards the East and it means this region is gaining dynamism. The interest in the western and central Asia region governed by concrete strategies and some specific compulsions ( the search of natural resources such as oil in the case of India or security border perceptions for China).

The solution depends on the balance of forces in the new scenario in Asia because India is emerging as a serious contender to China's power. But it is true that their interest are not going to clash in a short time period because China has accepted the central role of India in South Asia and it has also accepted it as a partner in its dialogue in the international fora. For example, China voted for India, instead of Japan to become a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. In spite of this, there is a lack of confidence between both the sides due to prevailing competition, although this recognize each other's predominant role.

## ***Chapter 5. Conclusion***



The nineties have created a much more favourable environment for the Sino-Indian relations than those existing during the Cold War period. But, at the same time, these relations are not free from conflict and competition due to the parameters which dominate the new world scenario. This is connected with the role that both the countries want to play in the world affairs. If China is a big power and is potentially the sole dominant power in Asia, India will act to counterbalance this situation because it is the only country which can do it. India wants also to be treated internationally according to its power and break the exclusive world institutions and restrictive treaties created in the previous order which do not reflect the equality of sovereign countries.

China has adapted to the new scenario with great dynamism and pragmatism and is the largest of the surviving communist regimes after the disintegration of the USSR. The essential view of the new international order by Beijing is *multipolar*, that is, several centres of power but, with respect to the immediate neighbourhood this perception is applied in a different way. China cannot avoid some given circumstances, for example, the existence of Japan as a centre of this power but is interested to restrain the emergence of other possible powers in the region. India has extreme importance for Beijing because of specific factors ( such as size, population, resources) and both the countries are sharing similar strategies to gain a presence in the world affairs ( and world market in the economic aspect). In this sense, the collaboration is necessary to guarantee stable and peaceful conditions in the immediate neighbourhood. But in a similar way the competition also exacerbates.

China has accepted the predominant role of India but is afraid of its security ambitions and it could be said that, in one way, China denies the role of India as a nuclear power maintaining the same stand of the other Five Permanent members of

the Security Council. Regarding this, the Chinese general security and strategic doctrine have not changed the essential points but its economic policy of “open doors”, has been liberalised to a great extent to boost trade relations.

What is relevant about China’s foreign policy during the last decade is the desire to improve the adverse conditions in the immediate scenario and to maintain cordial relations with its neighbours. This is significant in the case of India, Vietnam and Russia with whom Beijing has reached agreements to demarcate their boundaries. China’s diplomacy has been very active and dynamic to achieve these objectives.

With India, China has the most contested area in the border and one of its major concerns, Tibet, is also located in this geographical region. For that reason, Beijing is specially hard in its bargainings with the regime of New Delhi, which is more than territorial ambitions, its interest is in gaining security in an already settled territory. Indian imperatives are also concerned with security factors due to the location of the major areas in dispute: the Northeast and the West. For example, although Arunachal Pradesh is rich in resources, its strategical importance for India stands apart from exclusive economic consideration.

The normalisation process has brought peace with regard to the border dispute. During the last decade no significant incidents took place and the meetings of the military personnel of both the sides regulated in the 1996 agreement have contributed to create a better understanding between the parties. But the essential question of the border demarcation remains a deadlock which can either imply that there is an acceptance of the current situation or there is a total disagreement which impedes the progress of the talks. The point is that no substantial territorial concessions or changes are going to take place because both the sides are very reluctant to adopt drastic decisions in this sensitive area.

Apart from that, the dynamics of the Sino-Indian relations during the last decade are pointing out that there is no possibility of a return to a similar scenario like the 1962 war. First of all, China is solving all territorial problems by negotiations through hard bargainings and trying to improve relations with not very friendly countries in the past such as Vietnam or Indonesia. The only exceptional case of China using force is Taiwan, because this is an issue of territorial integrity. Secondly, China, established as a leading player of the international community, does not want to face adverse reactions of a possible conflict with India which can destabilize the country. The replacement of the ideology by the economy does not guarantee to the Communist party a long term stability.

India is not now the same country as it was in 1962 based on a great idealism which did not allow it to evolve a defensive policy. Security concerns since then are the main agenda of all government; because of domestic and international compulsions. It has managed a continuous permanent adverse scenario with Pakistan and the foreign interference in domestic affairs either by Pakistan or China was a common factor. India could practise such a policy in order to weaken its northern neighbour, which it tried in Tibet.

The nuclearisation of South Asia ( India and Pakistan) has been a hard setback to Chinese aspirations in the continent after the disintegration of the USSR and the consequent dismantling of its nuclear and military programme. China does not want to open the 'Nuclear Club' to India and allow its treatment as an equal partner. In the case of Beijing's support to Pakistan, it is based on a initial definition of supporting a weaker ally in order to make it relevant to 'bother' the real enemy, i. e., India. China wants to keep this policy open to keep India 'occupied' although its interests are

merely strategical and not real. Beijing wants to maintain a level of tension but not to develop a conflict.

The Sino-Indian approach is also a result of the Post- Cold war scenario. The role of external powers in the region has been minimized with the disintegration of the USSR due to security imperatives. Notwithstanding this, the presence of the United States's strengthening economic ties specially with China and Southeast Asia have been augmented. US policy is using the economic factor to diminue the ideological component.

Broadly speaking, it could be said that China's major interests at the regional level are concentrated in Southeast Asia, in the security issue and in the economic sphere. But at the same time, its concerns are not exempted from conflict because new territorial disputes can arise. Southeast Asian countries perceive China in a double way: as a partner who is a permanent member of the Security Council, for instance, a big power to counterbalance the influence of the west, and an enemy who has enormous aspirations in the South China Sea. Due to this reason, these countries want India to participate in the regional fora to exercise a counterbalance to the Chinese dominance. In this sense, New Delhi has the support from Thailand and Malaysia to broaden its sphere of influence and not to be confined to South Asia.

India's nuclearisation was seen as the creation of a nuclear parity in order to counter the Chinese growing power in the region, specially in Southeast Asia. It is necessary to point out that now the basic structure of relations of the ASEAN members has changed. During the Cold War, these countries had the US support for not failling in the Chinese sphere but now the reality is different. North America has improved relations with Beijing due to economics and is adopting a policy of non-

interference (such as in the case of Taiwan). For that reason, ASEAN members think that India is the best candidate to counterbalance China.

With respect to South Asia, the current situation is more favourable to India because the regional cooperation has improved India's relations with its neighbouring countries. The SAARC is seen as a factor of balance where the Indocentric character does not mean essentially dominance. Although differences exist, there is a framework to deal with each other as equals. In the past, China's policy in this region was based on denying India this special relationship it enjoys with these countries. Beijing propagated the bogey of the hegemonistic intentions of New Delhi's policy in order to portray it as a hostile neighbour.

The normalisation of Sino- Indian relations has brought about an improvement in India's relations with those countries and Chinese acceptance of the India's predominance in the region. Only the specific conditions in the Himalayan states of Nepal and Bhutan are carefully watched by Beijing because it concerns the stability of its immediate territory. It is possible that China perceives that its big southern neighbour has ambitions to project its influence in this region and this can be one of the reasons for the Chinese deployments in this sensitive area. But this fear also should be applied to India about its interest in the Buddhist areas beyond Tibet. As a result, China will not tolerate another Sikkim and India will not adopt the same stand of the fifties in Tibet if China was to push the borders towards the south. No conflict is envisaged in the near future but it is possible that domestic developments in the Himalayan states could give rise to new rivalries between the two big countries.

The nineties have meant a change as to how India and China deal with each other with respect to the previous decades. The good atmosphere prevalent is compared to the friendly relations enjoyed in the fifties but with different conditions.

India left its idealism and innocence in international politics to become more self-confident. It has adopted a strategy to adapt to the circumstances and, in a way, it has survived strong adverse situations (such as the permanent threat by Pakistan). In this sense, Chinese isolation and Chinese fears of the former USSR never became true. But China's dynamism was in contrast to India's incapability to react to the events in a pragmatic way.

As mentioned above the present state of good neighbourliness between India and China reminds one of the fifties. As at that time, both the countries considered the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence the main instrument to guide their bilateral relations. China, the 'new' China as in the fifties, is facing a second re-emergence. This one refers to the desire to play a key role in the international affairs. If in the beginning it was the Deng Xiaoping reforms, now it has spread to diplomacy and also to the military. India, as in the fifties, seems to ignore this later aspect although some politicians have expressed their concern due to specific developments.

China has an active nuclear policy, in spite of its adherence to some international treaties such as the NPT. It is modernizing its naval sector and restructuring its forces. Besides, after the desintegration, the former USSR, sold its modern weapons due to its economic crisis, from which China benefitted majorly. At the same time, China is suspicious about its interest in the South China Sea and in the Indian Ocean. India watches with special concern the developments in Myanmar, the main ally of Beijing in the Southeast Asian region. Apart from the concrete objective of the security of the Indian Ocean there is also the security factor of the Indian territory of Andaman and Nicobar islands.

New Delhi shows its preoccupation but it is not going far beyond to raise a formal protest and a hard line policy is left aside. Compared with the fifties, India did not take a concrete step to safeguard Tibet's independence and then it had to face an open confrontation with Beijing. Although it is desirable and even compulsory to approach China, New Delhi has to balance its aims and not undervalue any particular aspect in its foreign policy with this country. In spite of projecting its own interests, India's policy should take care of the others aspirations, too.

Notwithstanding this, it could be said that the last decade has meant a consolidation of the normalisation process of the relations between India and China initiated in the eighties. This process has been facilitated by some important changes in the international scenario. With respect to the major powers, India lost the support of the USSR and the United States has reduced their military presence in the region (Indian Ocean and Pacific), although they developed a new strategy to gain presence in these markets. The 'role' or the 'space' left by the superpowers has been occupied by the regional powers, that is, India and China. In this sense, it is true as some scholars stated that there is a resurgence of Asia in the world scenario.

The normalisation process between India and China is a result of the acceptance of the preeminence of each other but as an equal partner. This process does not mean the absence of conflicts but underlies the fact that divergences should be negotiated within a peaceful framework because their bilateral issues have an impact on the stability in the region and even, in the Asian continent. Both the countries share similar capabilities in security terms which is not going to reduce the competence and also distrust towards each other's activities. Both China and India want to play a predominant role in Asia and in the world. The difference is while China has been accepted as a major power, India is not and is confined to the regional

space of the world affairs. Even after becoming a nuclear power, India has not faced any major achievement with the exception of the creation a kind of parity with the northern neighbour. It is expected that no major conflicts will take place between the two countries after the consolidation of the normalisation process in their relations and also that either side can act as a factor of stability in the other's conflicts.



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