

## Strategic Cooperation of Sino-Indo Relations in the 21st Century after the 2020 Border Standoff

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### Abstract

*The purpose of the study is to examine Sino-Indo relations after the 2020 border standoff and aims to rethink their bilateral ties in the 21st century through a pragmatic approach. The design of the study is descriptive and explores the chronological dispute of Sino-Indo relations since 1962 onwards. The fact of the quantitative method also explores all sorts of both state relationships. The source of the study is secondary. The pattern of 3Ms [mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest] would reframe the 21st-century relations. Both China and India rethink their relations to enhance the theory of interdependence through robust engagements in the Panchsheel principle as well as political dialogue and debates with a consensus approach. The study shows that diplomatic ties define neither friends nor enemies/rivalry but always want a powerful and stable neighbor. This study determines the state strategy and balance of power. It is relevant to foreseeable research on border disputes and provides empirical insights about Hindi-Chini (Indians and Chinese brothers) relations. The study examines the exploratory variable of border dispute only. The finding provides a better understanding of the Sino-Indo however, the ties is going on abnormal after the border dispute issue. Theoretically, it drives equilibrium, but empirically, it is a rational behavior that matters.*

**Keywords:** Border standoff, bilateral ties, dispute, dialogue, global south

### Introduction

The global order has changed *realpolitik*. Today the world is interdependent and constrained; in terms of this, there is the rise of a new global power (Jaishankar 2020), mainly China and India. The recent revitalization of China and India has impacted rapidly on world affairs. Post-globalization world order is going through major transformation and shift in their new alliances. The concurrent rise of China and India represents a geopolitical event of historic proportions, and both states in global order opposed great-power politics and called instead for a multipolar world (Tellis & Mirski, 2013) or the multi-alignment (The Print, 2022). Thus, Sino-Indo relations walk together, represent the theme of the global south, reject uni-polarity, coexisted peacefully and dominated global market (Dodh, 2021).

China and India are most rapidly raising powers in contemporary global politics (Ogden, 2022). The democratic and communist regime states have their influential leaders and figures of the global south

and serve as the anchors of a dawning Asian century in a volatile world (Bo, 2024). Thus, it is time for the Asian century and jostling for Asian leadership. Furthermore, Beijing does not desire global south leadership; however, New Delhi has the ambition (Bo, 2024). For instance, India is keen to represent an independent voice across the global south in the context of strategic competition between the US and China (Kulkarni & Fiala, 2024). Sino-Indo relations have been reflected in the 21st century within their own regional interests and led as a global player.

China and India are “undoubtedly rising” (Ogden, 2019) upon global politics and history of the 21st century rotating around two giants (*The Economic Times* 2016). For this, in-depth involvement in international affairs, China and India are being set their comfortable trajectory. In addition, analysts predict that India will become the world’s third-largest economy by 2027; many global states are now questioning China’s ability to overtake the United States as the world’s largest within the next few decades (Bardhan et al., 2023). It is clear that a Sino-Indo relationship is inevitable. To do so, both have gradually increased their global influence, which belongs to the cordial slogan of “*Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*” (“Indians and Chinese are brothers”) relations. Despite that the two Asian powers have a complex, neurotic relationship (Bajpai, 2023).

Since the years of 2017 and 2020 border clashes, a Sino-Indo relationship is once again worried. After the border standoff, the bilateral relations were disappointed. Therefore, “nearly four years on, there have been efforts to normalize relations between the two, but these have been strained by repeated border skirmishes (Kulkarni & Fiala, 2024). The relations are based on a limited level, i.e., only in the multilateral forum. Recently, the Chinese ambassadorial post to India remained vacant for 18 months until May 2024, the longest since 1976 (Kulkarni & Fiala, 2024). Looking forward, both states could struggle for the rapprochement of retaining cordial relations. They had rejected the offering of US President Donald Trump's mediator proposal on May 27, 2020. Successfully, they have agreed to resolve their border dispute without any role of mediator. It is a positive indication for neighboring states to focus on cooperation and collaboration.

In terms of this Sino-Indo dependency, today the scenario of the South Asian region is significant for the global regime. The two giant nations China-India are the most populous with nuclear weapons ambitious states; however, at present time there are engagements entitle as a raising power to develop their influence and strong alliances in the region, especially in the Indo-Pacific Strait and South China Sea (SCS). For these changing global patterns, China and India even more exercised a defensive strategy, thoroughly on the use of new diplomatic tools: BRI and Quad-security partnerships. Multilaterally, Beijing and New Delhi co-joined their handshake on the global platforms of the G20, SCO, and BRICS. Both sides act like unfolded cat-and-mouse tactics in the 21st century. Today’s two leaders, Jinping (in 2012) and Modi (in 2014), are the dominant global leaders.

Though “India-China Civilization Dialogue and Common Initiative” (Kulkarni, 2022) has a significant opportunity in shaping to rethink the new world order in the 21st century. They should rediscover their own 5,000-year-old civilization in the theme of mutual respect as a best partner. Therefore, the process of normalization intensifies the relations normalcy and “accelerating further stabilization and turning of a new page” (Lidarev, 2024). From a broader perspective, all-weather of normalization drives the relations. Diplomatic ties established since 1950s. The relations occurred with mutual respect and develop as sustainable relations. Between the two Asian giants, pay a reciprocal coordination and could open the doorstep of thinkable consideration for easing bilateral tension. Thus, both states have emphasized their bilateral relations through the principle of Panchsheel.

This paper assesses the impact of border standoffs on strategic cooperation in Sino-Indo relations and evaluates the questions of how both states rethink their relations in the 21st century.

## **Literature Review of Sino-Indo Relations**

The study of Sino-Indo relations done by numerous Sinologist and Indologist scholars and experts highlights their perceptions, views, and opinions on Sino-Indo relations context. In this research paper additionally exploring how China-India relations is going on in the present day after the inflection of bilateral relations in 2020 border clash. The researcher has reviewed the chronological order of their relations and what matters they have reshaping 21st century relations at cooperation. In term of this, the review covers with thematic subheadings;

**Historical Context-** Tharoor (2008) in his article, “Can Elephant dance with the Dragon?” and Chellaney (2012) in his article, “The Lessons of the China-India War” examines Sino-Indo relations. They both said that Sino-Indo has a divergent political regime but has a clear share and strong interest in close cooperation in the regional and global order. Today, the two great games will be in Asian or Chinese (Singh, 2023) discussed the current relationship between China and India. They have been blossoming economic ties however setting aside their border disputes. Now the tectonics of the trans-Himalayan relationship is shifting and could transform their relationship-and geopolitics (*The Economist*, 2023). As per these determinants factors reviewed that China and India are try to re-define their relations as the title, “*less than allies, more than friends.*” Current patterns of global order work on the Beijing and New Delhi basis. In terms of the seasoned diplomat Rao (2023), in her book, “The Fractured Himalaya-India Tibet China 1949-1962,” discussed the Sino-Indo relations with the approach of 1962 causes, courses, and the legacy of the war. In chapter 8, one of the China scholar and Harvard academic, Arunabh Ghosh, argued Sino-Indian bilateral relations depend beyond high political life and factors of cultural, scientific, and economic provide a fresh perspective on relationships after the era of post-Panchsheel. In addition, Indian Bagchi (1944) referred to ties between India and China as shared common civilization, while Chinese pilgrim Xuan Zang metaphorical expression in relations between India and China. He said the bilateral road is too long, so do not mind the smallness of the present relations (p. 205). The relations of Sino-Indo are evergreen and long-lasting; however, some paradoxes still exist. Therefore, the review is based on analytically to the view of foreign experts on global relationship especially in this paper Sino-Indo relations. The analysis is drawn from prior original reflections of the foreign policy makers. Therefore, in the examining of the Sino-Indo relations, reviewing is on the lens of neorealist theory.

**Theoretical Perspectives-** Kissinger (2010) describes the path of Chinese legacy and how they engaged in international environment, interestingly with the US. *San Francisco Chronicle* acknowledged the Kissinger in bringing about the historic rapprochement between the United States and China. It also explains the philosophical and cultural values of Chinese society, the integrated and disintegrated Chinese legacy, the culture revolution, diplomatic patterns in global and regional contexts, and also the clash of the Himalayan border and thereof shaping of China. In chapter 7 of page 184, the disputes in the Himalayan region are described. Since the 1950s, the Sino-Indian relationship has been balanced. But China looked at the demarcated line of the McMohan line, and Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru claimed the culture and sentimental interest of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism as their strategic consequences. Even, Dalai Lama fled to India in 1959, which changed the strategic discourse between China and India, the author believes. As per this, the dilemma of Aksai Chin remained in the present-day relations of China and India. Kishore Mahbubani, a distinguished fellow at the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore, explained the Kissinger

book on China, saying the world would be a safer place if western leaders learned how to deal with different civilizations, like those of China and India.

Mohan (2012) is eloquent to describe the realistic explanation of forthcoming relations between China, the US, and India depending upon the tri-junction trajectory of the Indo-Pacific. The central hypothesis examines the reflection image of the Indo-Pacific maritime region and how rivalry between China and India is reshaping their security dilemma. Both are now present-day as rising naval military capacity states. The rivalry notion yet continued but reviews their competitive dynamic in a variety of spheres. The author also discussed how the triangular security dynamic has begun. It outlines repeated attempts to develop good neighborly relations, and Beijing claims that there is no threat from India and just of relentless rivalry. Despite that, present-day emerging India challenged rising China. Significantly, it suggests that in the 21st century, relations redefine from the romanticism slogan of *Hindi-Chini bhai bhai* to building *Chindia*. Thus, a Sino-Indo 21st century relationship is now ambitious on a political resolution rather than a perspective of historical and legal claims.

Duara and Perry (2018) identify to study the Sino-Indo states have divergent regimes, society to contemporary realpolitik competitors. Despite that, both had been performing the Asian giants' politics. Gupta (2019) argued in the *Sage Journals of China Report* that India and China responded to challenges of decolonization, state-building, and globalization, despite dissimilar regime types. In today's scenario, both states are intertwined by the circulatory forces of maritime strategy with the ancient shares of Buddhist philosophy. Critically, they study Sino-Indo politics in terms of their comparative institutions and values. Hoffmann (1990 and 2018) elapsed to ample study the clash of arms in the remote Himalayan region of the Sino-Indo borderland. The author argued it's a perceptive analysis of India's behavior under stress. Scholar Hoffmann inevitably explains the drama of Sino-Indo since the Kongka Pass incident in 1959 to the clash of 1962, and he also added the drama of war in which Nehru requested to Kennedy. The central theme examines the Sino-Indo dispute as the pattern of behavioral crisis and political perceptions, image, and personal relationship.

**Recent Events-** Saran (2022) clearly makes their fascinating view on Chinese history of civilization and its role in determining how it sees 'India and the World'. India's relations with China have remained frosty since the unfortunate border war of 1962, the author believes, and seek to normalize China. Saran also explains why the rise of Communist China, the remarkable display of cultural assertion, the idea of Confucius philosophy, culture, and language impacts can be as important in shaping Sino-Indo relations and the world.

Chellaney (April 21, 2023) strategically describes how the Himalayan frontier region has set of their journey after the two countries border standoff. Eventually, India challenged China's power of expansion in this pivotal region of today's geopolitics. Vividly, it focused on the strategic factors that stagnated the Sino-Indo relations. The muscular admire or fear of Indo-Pacific expansion, the defense pact of AUKUS, the problem of two sides; the issue of Arunachal Pradesh, the Taiwan Strait, and the South China Sea, as well as the geopolitics of Bhutan, could explain how to build up a potential partner. For this, the scholar suggests Sino-centric Asia, western Asia, including the US, has great attention in the long-term border confrontation and how they reshape Asian geopolitics.

Moreover, seasoned diplomat Jaishankar (2024) asserted that his perception of India's value in the global arena strengthened their relationship and ability to shape the global agenda as well. The author also makes an attempt to explain how India strongly runs its institutions and its statecraft during the era of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The author has described the idea of modern India with broader

confidence to flourishing their epic diplomatic practice; Ramayana and Mahabharata, both in the Global South and North, respectively. Significantly, Chapter 8 deals with India's relations with China and border areas, a detailed and practical set of understandings and agreements between China and India. Thus, the relationship is focused on their management, even as negotiations were conducted on the resolution of the boundary dispute. However, the Galwan have so profoundly disturbed the relationship that the author describes and suggests that the 3Ms-mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest-try to may help both nations to make the right decisions.

### **Nepali Perspective on Sino-Indo Relations**

Vividly, Nepal has conducted its bilateral ties on the principles of Panchsheel, equality, and mutual interest as well. Nepal shares its border with the world's most populous states, China and India. Nepal enhances balance in the tripartite border relations between China and India. Despite that, some of the border areas are yet to challenge Nepal's relations with two giant states, China and India. For China, Nepal and China demarcated the boundary agreement on March 21, 1960, and replaced the *Treaty of Thapathali*. The treaty had recognized China's sovereignty over Tibet and agreed to surrender all privileges and rights granted by the old treaty (ORF, 2020). Further, the boundary protocols of 1963, 1979, and 1988 and even a joint inspection group and committee are the factors to resolve their border disputes between Nepal and China. However, both sides' inspections continuously group working on the border issues. In contemporary affairs, Nepal and China have reviewed their way forward, looking at the remaining border disputes often in the areas of Humla (Pillar No. 57), Gorkha, and Kimathanka (Sankhuwasabha) (*The Kathmandu Post*, 2024). Similarly, there is no major problem between Nepal and China (Pokharel, 2023). In terms of the India side, the border relations between Nepal and India are more closely open than China. Both states have strong sentiments of people-to-people contacts in religious and social structure. The relationship between the two countries is deep, broad, and wide (Sharma, 2024), which makes the bilateral ties special. Both states have demarcated the *Treaty of Sugauli*, 1816, and the Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1950, and various border protocols and joint inspections. As per this, the border was demarcated between Nepal and India, and there have not been any major disputes. The two countries have completed 98 percent of the survey work along their border. Border problems between the two countries exist only in Susta and Kalapani, which the two countries hope to resolve through negotiation (Jha, 2023). Thus, it is the lesson for China and India border relations-how Nepal demarcated to resolve their border issues between two giant states.

### **Research Methodology**

This research paper reviewed the study of Sino-Indo relations through the chronological disputes of the border standoff. The research adopted the exploratory design depends upon the prior research originality and their factual textual context. The positivist philosophy determines how relations are abnormal after border standoffs. The problem of the study is to exercise through the qualitative method. In terms of this method, this research describes an accurate and systematic description of something or finds out a particular area of interest in Sino-Indo relations. In addition, the research reflects the contextual framework of Sino-Indo since 1962 onwards in a quantitative way. In data analysis, the paper used secondary sources of materials accessible for JSTOR, Google Scholar, published/unpublished dissertations, scholar articles, and thereof.

In terms of the **research gap**, there had already been all sorts of chronological studies and doing their research paper to examine Sino-Indo relations. However, this paper explored a new paradigm shift of unsolved border disputes that changed their path of bilateral ties with divergent forms after the 2020 border standoff. As per the **ethical consideration**, there is a proper citation and acknowledgement of the original ideas of scholars.

## **Analysis**

### ***Bilateral Relations after Border Standoff***

In Asia today, the ongoing emergence of India and the rise of China are key elements in a modern great game. India and China are the true competitors. Apart from this, the US strongly joined the player game. In the border regional context, the US has also concentrated its main strategy priority in Asia as an alliance in the name of the Indo-Pacific with the formation of Quad and AUKUS. The India-China border will remain a live issue because Chinese actions have cast doubt on the confidence-building measures (Menon, 2021). Similarly, India seeks the restoration of the status quo, and China hopes to move the status quo that has been created. Despite that, trade between the two countries continues to grow, but strong bilateral relationships do not sit well together (Menon, 2021; *India Today*, 2024). It is clear that dialogue of mutual interest rejuvenated the India-China relations in the Asian century with Asian order.

Pragmatically, the India-China border dispute shares a 3,488-km-long (2,167-mile) Line of Actual Control (LAC)—the de facto international border. The disputes are in the western and eastern sectors. Both states have shared its unique civilization, its philosophical notion, giant neighbors, and 2.7 billion populations, despite that border clash yet continued in the present global order. Thus, India and China's border problems are not new; it's the circumstances surrounding them that have changed (Taylor, 2020). The pattern of cordial behavior is needed to examine their bilateral relations and even also needed stable external environment (Ganguly and Pardesi, 2020) to boost developmental path.

The border dispute accelerates the region's uncertainty. In contemporary situations, the tussled relations increased since the 2013 standoff in the Chumur region (*India's Himachal Pradesh*), the major face-off tri-junction (India, China, and Bhutan) region of Doklam, and the 2020 standoff in the 14000 feet of the Galwan region. The major dispute site of India-China relations is McMahon Line. China neither accepted nor approves the Shimla Agreement Treaty, also called the McMahon Line, although it is also considered a LAC. In the border dispute area of *Askini Chin*, controlled by China and claimed by India, whereas Arunachal Pradesh (China called *Southern Tibet*) is controlled by India and claimed by China. Therefore, comprehensive negotiation and dialogue enhanced the future relations.

Inevitably, technical and political understanding is required in a sage Himalayan region. In theory, Beijing and New Delhi have different perceptions about the extent of their territories (Ganguly and Pardesi, 2020) and display their own brand of 'wolf warrior' foreign policy (*Ibid*, and *The Washington Post*, 2021). Both state militaries have met 18 times; even the Chinese military crossed India's territory within 1,025 times (*The Economic Times*, 2019 & SCMP, 2019), which brawled the relations. And now, the future of the relationship—that is no end of the border challenges. Furthermore, Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar argued to define India-China relations, reshaping their trajectory in the way of an "extraordinarily complex relationship," in his book *Why Bharat Matters*. Likewise, Dr. Geeta Kochhar, assistant professor at the Jawaharlal Nehru

University's (JNU) Centre for Chinese and Southeast Asian Studies, believes Modi and Xi's profiles as strong leaders might actually help resolve the conflict, if they wished" (Purohit, 2019).

To conclude the dispute, Wang Yi, the Chinese top diplomat, outlines that the China-India border dispute should find a mutually acceptable solution to the border problem without letting "specific issues" define the overall relationship. And in an interview with *Newsweek* magazine, Modi also describes relations with China as "important and significant" and expressed hope that border stability could be restored (*The Economist*, 2024). Therefore, both countries have thought of a new paradigm for the old status quo solution, rethink geopolitics, and find new ways to cooperate and thrive (Kanthan, 2023). As per this, India and China have been establishing to maintain peace and tranquility in border areas. Both sides are also managing ongoing sources of bilateral tension (SCMP, 2019). India and China resume normal relations and should their double efforts within 22<sup>nd</sup> rounds of talks (SCMP, 2019; 2024). Thus, after the border standoff in late April, border talks were "progressive and satisfactory" and "no fresh tension has come up (*The Economist*, 2024) between India-China relations, said Rajnath Singh, Defense Minister of India. Lastly, China and India should find ways and means of enhancing their relationship and managing conflagrations at the border (Singh, 2024).

### ***Two leaders; Modi-Xi and their role in border issues***

In contemporary global and regional affairs, the two Asian giant state leaders Modi-Xi leadership impacts the world order. Today, the dimensions and aspects of both states have been changed. Even though, two leaders stated the global surroundings to end the war between Russia and Ukraine. PM Modi said that the abiding and peaceful resolution of the conflict through dialogue, peaceful means, and diplomacy (*Aljazeera*, 2024; *The Moscow Times*, 2024). Another side, President Xi, has also called the world power to the end of the war. Xi reiterated that global leaders would help Russia and Ukraine resume direct dialogue and negotiations and praised its "constructive and important" peace initiatives (*The Indian Express*, 2024; *The Hindu*, 2024). As per this, the researcher analyzed how these two leaders significantly committed to resolving their border issues.

Interestingly, two leaders met continuously on the international and regional stages. Some of the forums share their common interests and regional goals, including BRICS, the G20, and the Global South. Modi-Xi shares cordial and warm welcome each other's. However, between 2014 and the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Modi met with Xi 18 times and visited China five times, an unprecedented level of interaction between the two countries' leaders (Donthi, 2024). Thus, a high-level talk with two leaders' remains the best bet for both "establishing stability on the border" (Donthi, 2024). Despite that, there are different allies' in the international and regional stage in terms of strategic, security, economic, political, defense, and closest partners and allies. In terms of this, they were struggling to develop not friends, not enemies, but stable and powerful neighbors.

Additionally, Modi-Xi describes the China-India relations as long-lasting strategic and cooperative partners rather than rivals, and both countries are chasing the dream of "national rejuvenation (Tiezzi, 2014). Thus, the present two leaders emphasize their strong role in border issues. Earlier, the border relations faced the status quo solution. The LAC is not a full-fledged solution on both sides, especially China. In the periods of classical leader Nehru-Enlai was also unable to settle the disputed Sino-Indo boundary. However, in the era of two leaders, Rajiv Gandhi-Deng Xiaoping somewhat going the relations on normalization than previous. Presently, Modi-Xi continuously agreed to intensify efforts to de-escalate border tension (*The Times of India*, 2023).

***Border dispute and its challenges in 21<sup>st</sup> Century***

Border dispute is not a new issue in international relations. As per the idea of the state, the political community interacts and reacts to all sorts of issues. Thus, in the 21st century, China-India should rethink their border dispute within *the realpolitik* world. After the border standoff in 2020, the relations are not going normal. There has been a series of aggressive strategies and skirmishes between both states military troops. The relations have grown increasingly “abnormal” (Markey & Scobell, 2023; Singh, 2023). Furthermore, India has banned 59 Chinese apps and targeted Chinese companies with tax raids (Donthi, 2024), and also regarding China in trade, cultural exchanges, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as issues related to Taiwan and the South China Sea, the relationship between India and China has become one of the most tense relationships among major global powers (Zongyi, 2023). There has been peril of challenges remaining after standoff.

Despite facing significant challenges, both China and India continue to deal with border threats. Similarly, between 1993 and 2013, Indian and Chinese diplomats signed a series of border agreements to try to minimize the dispute and reduce the risk of violent escalation by restricting, for instance, the use of firearms by both armies (Donthi, 2024). Donthi also argued on the China-India border as the fundamental disagreement persisted and sparked recurring flare-ups, including a streak of border standoffs in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2017. Both countries sought to paper over their differences through two informal summits in 2018 and 2019, but the worst was yet to come. In the spring of 2020, thousands of Chinese troops advanced into areas claimed by India, leading to clashes in which at least 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed (Donthi, 2024). Therefore, recent years of clash have suffered their common interest in the global order. For this, both state high-level delegates and their representatives have continuously driven on the border settlement issues, which ease its development as a global power.

For the foreseeable future, the Beijing-New Delhi ties need more common global platforms like as BRICS and G20 and “plays a long game to advance its interest” (Markey & Scobell, 2023). As per this, the two primary unsolved concerns are Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh challenged to raise their tension in the 21st century also. Despite the other factors, such as the Dalai Lama and their Tibet issue, China violated the 1993 border pact, and today the active role of the US in the Himalayan region would serve to make the border “more complicated” and worsen the relations (Singh, 2023). Thus, the two emerging and rising powerful countries, China and India, have yet to face the unresolved challenge in the 21st century. But top-level understanding is reducing these challenges.

***Table 1: India-China Standoff from Post-2020***

<b>Clash Timeline</b>	<b>Impact</b>
Galwan Valley Clash 2020	20 Indian and 4 Chinese fatalities
Sikkim Skirmish 2021	Clashed in Naku La Pass
Pangong Lake Shots Fired Clash 2021	Violating the 1996 non-firearms agreement
Tawang Clash 2022	Soldiers injuries
Both leaders Xi and Modi in BRICS 2023	Agreed to de-escalate the border issues
Both Foreign Ministers in SCO Summit 2024	Agreed to step up to discussions to address border issues
October 2024 Agreement	Re-establishes pre-2020 patrolling rights in the strategic regions of Depsang and Demchok

***Source: (Aljazeera, 2020; Aguiar and The Economic Times, 2024)***

The above timeline has discussed the China and India border tension raised since 2020. There is only agreement to de-escalate the border issues. Thus, the border issues have been temporarily resolved. Earlier, the clash of Doklam in 2017 and the LAC violation in 2019 increased the bilateral relations with complexity and worsened them.

## **Discussion**

Today, the key players in the great game, China and India, are facing border issues. The researcher has examined that both states now create an equidistance and favorable environment in the Himalayan region. They have driven their foreign policy based on five principles of *Panchasheel* and defined stable relationships to ensure peace and development in the region. Despite the standoff between two giant states, now they are ready to improve bilateral ties and work on border issues. It has also a more realistic approach between them. The triumph of PM Modi's third term, India's Foreign Minister, S. Jaishankar, highlighted resolving these border issues as a key focus under Modi's new administration, and China expressed its readiness to work with India (*The Economic Times*, 2024). There is a theory of balance that signifies the realistic apparatus in the Himalayan region and worked as a balance tiger of Asia. They also change the mindset of the *Chinese idiom* that one mountain cannot hold two tigers. But, in the 21st century, one mountain held by two tigers is needed for the global and regional balance.

In the above review analysis of this paper, both state leaders will agree on each other's strategic interests. There is a management of realistic political solutions needed and ease to examine the new paradigm of border tension between China and India. The two countries would handle a high-level region tension amicably and maintain their territorial values of each other's border. In addition, they do not overreact with the support of third parties, US-India and China-Pakistan. Honestly, the border sensitiveness only held between China and India and rejected the involvement of their allies. It means that "a comprehensive agreement to demarcate the border would be ideal, but domestic politics in both countries make this task prohibitively difficult. In the absence of such a deal, political leaders in both countries should seek to complement military protocols with far more fluid high-level engagement" (International Crisis Group, 2023). Hence, the two states have concerned their border issues with top priority for enhancing domestic and international power balance. Both state leaders would attend their common forum and work to their interests. The leaders do not skip the forum of the G20, SCO, and thereof. In the above discussion of the subchapter, China-India exercised a pragmatic diplomacy model both in bilateral ties and border standoff. Therefore, for a resolution to be reached, China and India will require sustained diplomatic engagement, mutual respect for each other's concerns, and a willingness to compromise (Thondup, 2024).

In the implication of regional geopolitics, China and India are raising their strategic importance. Both states are engaged in various new partnerships and alliances to gain geopolitical relevance. Despite that, both leaders are shaking hands with promoting regional stability. The implication of BRI and Indo-Pacific has far-reaching effects on regional as well as global politics.

## **Conclusion**

Present-day, China-India is a complex and paradoxical relationship. Beijing and New Delhi rethink a new approach in their robust engagements in political dialogue and border standoff. The study explored how pragmatic philosophy develops China-India 21<sup>st</sup> century bilateral ties. Both sides are actively involved in establishing an extraordinary complex relationship. For this, the theory of

interdependence and balance of power is needed to signify each other's territorial values. Another factor to conclude the study is that the Xi-Modi administration has a strong ability to resolve the border standoff if they rethink their like-minded approach. Thus, the diplomatic mutual effort is required to rejuvenate the relations. In the words of Jaishankar, the 3Ms-mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest would reframe 21st-century relations between China and India. Significantly, there have been powerful political discussions and debates on the border matter. Earlier, the efforts of Nehru-Zhou Enlai and Rajiv-Deng established the forward-looking relationship but continued the status quo situation as well. The two states are strong leaders with strong national sentiments pursuing their 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding in border disputes and resume the bilateral ties as the process of normalization—cordial, healthy, and admirable. Likewise, the patterns of behavior were also revised by both sides and their contiguous allies. They also rethink their behavior, which will determine their values and interests. China and India treat each other as neither good neighbors, however, nor friends nor enemies/rivalries. In terms of the methods, both countries should use the instruments of dialogue and diplomacy, confidence-building talks, and demarcation of borders through diplomatic negotiations. As per this, China-India drives their relations on fair solutions and ends the aggressive behavior.

China and India committed the path of *Panchsheel* and operates their foreign affairs and security strategy and joined alliance groups (G20, BRICS, Quad, AUKUS, and BRI) based on peaceful coexistence in the region and beyond. Lastly, the Sino-Indo policymakers, scholars, and leaders examine the border resolution to sue the reference cite of the decade-long border settlement resolution held between Sino-Russia since 2003 and the formally demarcated line between China and Vietnam. Thus, the Sino-Indo also learns lessons from it and implements the same policy, strategic, nationalist theme, and pride of value itself. Therefore, after this, the 21st century also rejuvenates the slogan of “*Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai*” (“Indians and Chinese are brothers”) relations within the flavor of pragmatic approach in a diplomatic manner.

### **Recommendation for Policymaker**

- **Drive Amicable Instruments:** Both sides' leaders, ministers, experts, and bureaucrats will have to drive the bilateral issues through the theme of cordial partnership. Earlier, China and India rejected third-party involvement in their border issues. Example: President Donald Trump proposed a mediator role, but both states rejected it.
- **Strengthen Regional Diplomacy:** In the 21st century, China and India are needed to collaborate on regional issues like infrastructure development, people-to-people contact, and counter-terrorism through forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Both states diplomats and technocrats shall work on the notion of regional stability.
- **Enhanced Diplomatic Dialogue:** Establishing regular diplomatic dealings and dialogues to address border disputes can prevent misunderstandings. Thus, China and India would dialogue on the theory of interdependence and balance of power. It is necessary for continuously engaging in diplomatic relations to enhance their further relationship.
- **Mutual Rights in Border:** - China and India would restore their mutual respect and rights in the border region. That is required for establishing mutual consent in the border issues for both sides.

Example: recent agreement to restore mutual patrolling rights in *Depsang Plains* and *Demchok*. This right only resolved the temporary China-India border tension near LAC.

- **Rethink their relations in the 21st century:** Both are the most populous and have economically and militarily modernized states; thus, China and India are active in handling the border tension with the principle of peaceful coexistence. China and India work together in the regional and global South through win-win situations. Both state leaders flow up their relations continuously in a friendly way. Chinese and Indian leaders are required to rethink their relations in all weather.

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