

THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR INTERNATIONAL ORDER?

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECENT THAW IN SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

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Amee Patel examines the warming relationship between the two most populous countries in the world. He shows that the theoretical frameworks of power transition and balance-of-power, while useful for situating this bilateral relationship in the broader global system, ultimately prove inadequate. By failing to take into account the extent to which economic competition might hinder a theoretically-viable strategic alliance, they overstate the future evolution of this new cooperative friendship.

A concept central to Mao Zedong Thought is a belief in contradictions. Mao viewed the world as inherently conflictual, with certain struggles more imminent than others.¹ To put down the most pervasive contradiction first, Mao advocated forming strategic alliances. This “united front work” was evident in the Chinese Communist Party’s (CCP) strategic partnership with Guomindong (GMD) to defeat the Japanese threat in 1945.² While the CCP has attempted to rein in ideology as its base of legitimacy, this tenet on contradictions is still reflected in China’s relations with India. China undoubtedly desires greater regional stability with its neighbor. A more comprehensive analysis of the recent thaw in relations, however, will reveal China’s attempt to remove its greatest contradiction — the United States.

Classical international relations theory such as power transition and balance of power offer valuable insight into China’s role and resentment of the unipolar international order defined by the United States. While both theories offer a useful framework for assessing China’s role on the world stage, neither

takes into account the many dimensions a Sino-Indian alliance would have. While China and India may share a deep distaste for the current international order as described by theoretical frameworks, the nations’ competing interests, primarily economic, will hinder any such partnership between the two Asian giants. This paper will utilize both theories to set up the international system and China’s view of it. It will look at the current thaw in Sino-Indian relations and analyze the difficulties in turning this friendship into a strategic alliance to counter the United States’ dominance in the international community.

Power transition theory:

the current international system

The title of one analysis sums up Sino-Indian relationship most concisely: “China-India relations: not independent of US-China relations.”³ At the core of Sino-Indian relations rests a shared response to the international system and, more specifically, the role played by the United States in shaping it. Any discussion of the recent thaw in

THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR ORDER?

China's relations with India must, therefore, begin with a look at the current international order. The power transition theory provides a fitting medium to frame this very question. Broadly speaking, the power transition theory is a realist approach to international relations. Originally put forth by theorist A. F. K. Organski in the early years of the Cold War, the theory's foundation rests on the belief that each nation's power (which was originally determined by Organski as a nation's per capita GDP) determines its role on the world stage.⁴ The result is a hierarchical international system with an uneven balance of power.⁵ Those with the most power are defined as dominant powers and assert enormous influence on the international system as a whole. Political theorist Douglas Lemke wrote, "The dominant country establishes an international order with rules that direct political, economic, diplomatic and military interactions."⁶ Dominant powers play a crucial role in setting up and influencing world politics.

The international system Organski witnessed in the early 1950s as he developed the power transition theory was a bipolar structure with dominant power status divided more or less equally between the USSR and the US. The post Cold War structure, however, is unequivocally distinguished by the US's unipolar dominance. America has developed the "rules of the game" for multilateral organizations like the United Nations and NATO. It provides much of the financial and advisory support for the IMF and World Bank. In return, the United States exerts the sole veto power in the organizations' international economic decisions.⁷ The reason for much of the nation's authority inevitably stems from its immense economic power. In 2002, the US ranked highest in gross national income with \$10.2 trillion.⁸ The second and third richest countries,

Japan and Germany, could not even compare with their combined GNI of \$6.20 trillion.⁹ While economic power is not the only determinant of a nation's power, it has undoubtedly helped establish its military and political influence around the world. The war against terrorism and the recent invasion of Iraq illustrate this military and diplomatic will. No other leader could have unilaterally invaded Iraq or established a coalition against international terrorism as President George W. Bush did in his first term of office. Moreover, the vast number of free trade agreements currently circulating the globe under the US's direction elucidates the clear and expansive power of this dominant nation. As the power transition theory asserts, the dominant power of the US and its influence in the international community is unmatched.

Yet this dominant power is not the sole player in power transition theory. As Jonathan DiCocco and Jack Levy wrote, "[Organski] also argued that there is usually a dominant power that sits atop an international hierarchy, positioned above several lesser great powers, other medium and smaller states, and dependencies."¹⁰ Great and weak powers also have an influence on the international system, albeit within the structure created by the United States. As Organski describes, the reason for this range in power is the different rates of growth nations undergo.¹¹ While the dominant power is defined as one with the most power, it does not necessarily experience the fastest *growth* in such power. On the other hand, the power transition theory delineates the great powers as nations experiencing fast growth rates, even though their absolute power remains to be less than that of the dominant state.

Despite the challenges it still must face, China can be classified as such a great power. Over the last decade, the nation's economy has been the

fastest growing in the world. With a GDP growth rate of 8.0 percent in 2001-02, China's economic expansion vastly exceeds the 2.4 percent growth rate of the United States.¹² This growth has created and added to China's military and diplomatic influence. While some analysts may criticize the classification of China as a great power, the nation's influence is unavoidable. As the United States aims to defuse the North Korea situation while using as little political capital as possible, officials turn the negotiation processes over to China. Particularly within the region, China is a dominating force that cannot be ignored. This influence is noticeable outside Asia as well. As a permanent member of the United Nation's Security Council, China has a powerful and distinct voice heard by all nations in the international community. Just as the power transition theory asserts, while China does not have the dominant influence over the rules of the game, it still retains significant influence on international relations.

China's dissatisfaction with the world order

In addition to distinguishing nations based on their power, the theory attempts to predict when power transitions from dominant to great nations are most likely. While the growth of great powers is important, the determining factor of power transitions is how the great power views the international order. Organski highlights the rapid growth of great powers as a potential cause of instability and conflict in the international order. Mark Amstutz wrote, "A key insight of this theory is its emphasis on a dynamic assessment of power patterns, rather than a static analysis."¹³ States consistently experience fluctuations in power – whether it is in military, political or economic strength. Power transition theory asserts that when a great power's stature surpasses that of

the dominant power, the former dominant nation will be forced to transfer its influence on the "rules of the game" to the new dominant power. While this transfer can result in violent means, it does not have to be the case. History provides several examples of peaceful power transitions. During World War II, the United States displaced Britain with its efforts on both fronts and with its leadership in creating multilateral organizations such as the League of Nations.¹⁴ Britain and the United States did not engage in war over this transition. In addition, Britain overtook France as the dominant power following Napoleon's defeat in the 19th century.¹⁵ These power transitions were smooth shifts that the dominant power accepted rather than contested. What the power transition theory points out, however, is that only when a great power, aided by its rapid growth, is *dissatisfied* with the balance of power set by the dominant nation will it seek new direction in the international system.¹⁶

Falling in line with this theoretical framework, China has indeed grown resentful of the United States' role as the dominant power in the international system. Nationalist fervor has amplified its desire to maintain territorial claims and hinder the paths of expansionist powers. As top Chinese leadership has made clear, the United States is China's greatest strategic concern.¹⁷ The United States' tendency toward intervention for "humanitarian" purposes frightens a China constantly struggling to retain its control over the dispute concerning Taiwan. Moreover, the hegemonic power of the United States, which China defined by the Bush Doctrine of preemption and unilateralist foreign policy, is seen to be expansionary. China views the US-created international order as a means for meddling in other nations' internal affairs. This is worrisome for more than China's territorial claims. The threat aims to

THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR ORDER?

undermine the rule of the CCP. In China's view, the United States' intention is not just to create the rules of the game in the international system, but also to expand its influence over other nations.¹⁸ For China, dissatisfaction toward this unipolar system is undeniably clear and present.

How will China resolve its dissatisfaction?

While the power transition theory accurately describes the structure of the international system and the animosity great powers direct towards it, the theory incorrectly articulates the action China is likely to undertake. As China specialist Wayne Bert wrote, "Chinese leaders would say that in many ways China is dissatisfied, but it is not clear that a laundry list of grievances and objectives add up to a profile of a nation that is willing to endure considerable sacrifice to change the international system."¹⁹ It is true that China detests the unipolar dominance of the USA and views the nation as its greatest concern. At the same time, it is less certain whether or not China desires to overtake the United States as the dominant power.

Citing the still limited power China holds in the international community, along with its many imminent internal challenges, Bert finds China has "more incentives to work within the system than to challenge it on a broad front."²⁰ This point has been the source of much contention for US foreign policy makers. China specialists diverge as to whether China intends to take the US's place as the dominant power or simply wants to balance US power. Bert's analysis of a dissatisfied great power's potential actions highlights China's likely move toward "system reformation" rather than "system transformation."²¹ While nationalistic fervor is pervasive in China, the nation is far from posing a serious threat to US power. China faces a difficult balancing act between

expanding its economic prosperity and ensuring that development occurs throughout the nation. Chinese leadership must also address separatist movements in Xinjiang and Tibet, requiring a lot of political capital that could otherwise be utilized in attaining greater global dominance.²² China's intentions to act on its resentment regarding the international system deviate from those proposed by the power transition theory due mainly to the internal dilemmas it must address. For while the CCP must establish a powerful position on the world stage, its legitimacy is ultimately based on China's handling of issues directly related to the people. Rather than wanting the top position in the international order, China seeks a less absolute solution by counterweighing its greatest contradiction. To better assess this more feasible course of action, another classic theory will prove illuminating: the balance of power theory.

Balance of power theory: a viable solution for a dissatisfied China

This classic international relations theory, initially put forth by political scientist Kenneth Waltz, asserts that alliances offer great powers a means of curbing the expansionism of a dominant power.²³ Waltz advocates the creation of a multipolar system in which great powers, sometimes in the form of coalitions, balance against the dominant power.²⁴ Both the power transition and balance of power theories offer valuable insights into the dynamic and static characteristics of nation-states. Power transition theory focuses on the dynamic nature of power shifts and asserts that alliances will be unable to withstand the constant fluctuations of power. DiCocco and Levy wrote, "Organski rejected [the balance of power theory] that an equality of capabilities between adversaries contributes to peace and argued that such a condition of parity is more

likely to lead to war.”²⁵ The balance of power theory, however, centers on a static analysis that assumes that these alliances serve as a constant that will help great powers counterweigh the hegemon’s power.²⁶ As Michael Mastanduno assessed the theory, “... we should find evidence that other major powers are, in Waltz’s words, ‘edging away’ from the United States and balancing or preparing to balance against it.”²⁷ In balance of power theory, China finds a viable theoretical solution to resist the unipolar world order it detests.

Despite their inherent differences, both power transition and balance of power theories offer useful frameworks with which to assess China’s intentions in the current international order. While the power transition theory offers a straightforward description of the United States’ role as a dominant power, the solution it offers – attaining dominant power status – is unreasonable given China’s current position. The balance of power theory, however, provides a more realistic approach: seeking a strategic alliance with another great power in an attempt to counterbalance the United States and to create a multipolar order. The recent thaw in Sino-Indian relations may serve as China’s perfect opportunity to attain the solution provided by the balance of power theory.

India: a practical candidate for China’s balance of power attempt

While India’s great power status may be more contested than China’s, the nation has great influence and emerging power in the world, albeit to a lesser extent than its neighbor. One of the most powerful qualities India offers is its politically stable democracy.²⁸ Despite the challenges it still faces, India’s political situation serves as a model for other developing nations. In addition to its successful politics, India experienced 4.6 percent economic

growth in 1992-2001, making it one of the ten fastest growing economies in the world.²⁹ This economic growth has had a similar effect on India as it has had on China, helping to expand its political and military role in the world.³⁰ In its short history as an independent nation, India has served as a champion for the developing world by providing leadership during the Cold War in the nonaligned movement and, most recently, by organizing the Group of 21, a coalition of developing nations formed shortly before the WTO Doha Development Agenda in Cancun last September.³¹ Under the leadership of India, Brazil and South Africa, “G-21” protested rich nations’ agricultural subsidies. India’s military threat also augmented tremendously in May 1998 when the nation tested three nuclear weapons outside of New Delhi. The nation’s historical legacy as a champion for the developing world and its nuclear capabilities makes it a nation whose support is desired by all. President Bush’s appeal to Indian leadership for support in the Iraqi war was as much a desire for troops as it was for India’s backing as a leader in the developing world. While India’s power relative to China remains low, it is still a great power within the international order as discussed in the power transition theory.

Moreover, with a population of over one billion people, India shares many of the same development and security issues as China. The economic growth rates cited earlier seem less impressive when compared to the wide income gaps in both nations and the 34.7 percent and 16.1 percent of Indians and Chinese, respectively, living below \$1 a day in 2003.³² In 1997-8, the poorest 10 percent of Indians and Chinese received 3.5 and 2.4 percent of total income consumption, respectively, while the richest 10 percent received 33.5 and 30.4 percent.³³ Both India and China must learn to balance the macro

and micro aspects of development, ensuring that the nation moves forward to a more prosperous future without leaving large segments of its populations behind. These developmental challenges are exacerbated by significant external security challenges. Until recently, escalating tensions with Pakistan required a large amount of political capital of India's leadership. China's continued struggle to retain its territorial boundaries in Tibet and Taiwan also require great attention. Improvements in Chinese and Indian relations could mean greater cooperation in aiding each nation's development. A strategic alliance between the two nations could promote greater regional stability.

India's resentment of the current world order

While improved relations could alleviate each nation's challenges, a further motivation is given by India's shared resentment toward the international system. Analyst John Garver wrote:

"These development-oriented motivations continued into the post-Cold War period, but the epochal shifts associated with that transition added an additional rationale for better Chinese relations with India: strengthening China's position in the face of US 'unipolar' pressure and interference."³⁴

As a nation that has spoken out for developing nations and has led a nonaligned movement in the face of dominant powers, India is undoubtedly skeptical of the current international order. In 1957, in the midst of the Cold War, former Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru warned that US imperialism would be the main cause of war.³⁵ He urged nations to back out of the bipolar world order and refuse to align with either power. Nehru asserted that a coalition of developing nations, the nonaligned movement, would succeed in balancing these bipolar threats.³⁶ While the international

order is no longer bipolar, India uses the same logic in supporting a multipolar international system today. Analyst John Garver wrote, "Neither China nor India liked the fact of unipolarity. Both resented it and felt it was unjust both in terms of its origins and its consequences."³⁷ A Sino-Indian strategic partnership could provide China with resolution to its biggest contradiction: US hegemony. The recent thaw seems like the first step in establishing this strategic alliance.

A recent thaw in Sino-Indian Relations

In June 2003, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee made a state visit to the People's Republic of China. Following the weeklong visit, leadership of the world's two most populous nations signed "The Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India."³⁸ Laying out the measures of friendship both states intended to undertake, the declaration stated, "The common interests of the two sides outweigh their differences. The two countries are not a threat to each other. Neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other."³⁹ For nearly half of the twentieth century, China's relationship with India had been one of mutual suspicion and halfhearted attempts toward cooperation. The declaration's signatories put into words what analysts had witnessed for nearly two years: a significant shift in Chinese and Indian attitudes toward one another. Efforts made by both countries, particularly in areas of political and diplomatic negotiations and military cooperation, reflect a return to Sino-Indian friendship yet fall short of a strategic alliance.

Boundary issues being resolved

China has entertained the idea of a Sino-Indian

partnership against dominant powers since the mid 1950s.⁴⁰ Each effort has been hindered by China's imminent strategic concerns, however. Through the nonaligned movement, China, as a passive observer, and India, as one of the movement's leaders, first came together to oppose the bipolar international system. Yet China's proclivity towards the Soviet bloc caused tension between the People's Republic and India, as India remained a staunch supporter of complete nonalignment.⁴¹ India's offer of sanctuary to the Dalai Lama in 1959 only widened the rift between the two neighbors.⁴²

Tensions finally exploded into outright war in 1962 over boundary disputes in the Himalayas. The indistinct 2,200-mile border between the Asian nations had been discussed somewhat in 1914 between Chinese Tibetan authorities and the British crown.⁴³ Shortly after gaining independence from Britain in 1947, India began demanding greater territorial reaches to its claims according to the so-called 1914 McMahon Line distinguished by earlier negotiations.⁴⁴ The Chinese government protested, claiming this compromise was an illegal affair since the Tibetan government had no autonomous governance.⁴⁵ As negotiations between the two nations failed and India continued to occupy the contested territory, China deployed troops into the region and began a surprise and aggressive attack on Indian soldiers stationed along the border. The war resulted in the death of over 2,000 Indian troops, China's seizure of Indian "territory," and, most importantly, a profound suspicion between the two nations that would last for decades to come.⁴⁶

While the two nations returned to the negotiation table time and again since the war, the mutual suspicion it caused hardly dissipated. Since former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China in 1988 in an attempt to improve relations, 14

meetings of a Sino-Indian Joint Working Group, a group assigned to resolve the boundary issues, have all been unsuccessful.⁴⁷ Both nations' stubborn refusal to limit their nationalistic tendencies for a compromise has resulted in little progress.

Vajpayee's recent visit, however, reflects a significant alleviation of tensions related to the four decade-long boundary dispute and has made even cynics of improved relations optimistic. During the visit, both China and India appointed special representatives to address the dispute. So far, the special representatives — Chinese vice foreign minister Dai Bingguo and Indian advisor to national security Brajesh Mishra — have met twice and reported that progress has been made.⁴⁸ Indian analyst Primit Mitra wrote, "Neither country's leadership seems in a hurry to withdraw any part of its contested territorial claims. But the mutual policy adjustment is unmistakable and points toward continued slow and pragmatic progress."⁴⁹ In addition to nudging border negotiations forward, the visit resulted in China's acknowledgement of India's claim to the northwestern state of Sikkim.⁵⁰ India also began to refer to "the Tibet Autonomous Region," China's name for Tibet in agreements.⁵¹ The thawing of Sino-Indian relations regarding territory promises to reduce the suspicion it caused four decades ago. As one analyst wrote, "...both nations have slowly come to the understanding that their national interests can be compatible. When asked, leading officials and scholars in both countries state that remaining disputes on borders are not worth a war."⁵²

Military tensions dissipating

This thaw in Sino-Indian relations has also been witnessed in the military tensions between the two giants. In 1998, the entire world was taken aback by

India's nuclear tests. When Vajpayee announced that three tests had taken place 330 miles outside of New Delhi, few nations stood behind India's decision.⁵³ The prime minister's letter to US President Clinton after conducting the tests offered three primary reasons for its action. One of these reasons given was the threat posed by China.⁵⁴ As Indian Defense Minister George Fernandes made clear in Mumbai prior to the tests, "We certainly have tensions and disputes with Pakistan, but for a country like India, Pakistan is not our biggest threat. The biggest threat is China."⁵⁵ The tests and statement made by a top Indian official created a ripple effect throughout the world, particularly damaging the already fragile relations with China. India's nuclear tests pushed efforts at alleviating tensions one step backward.

In a recent reduction of these military tensions, Indian and Chinese fleets engaged in joint naval exercises off the coast of Shanghai in November 2003, just months after the Sino-Indian declaration of renewed friendship was signed.⁵⁶ The exercise included a rescue mission simulation, where a Chinese ship was set on fire and then rescued by Indian warships and a Chinese-guided missile corvette.⁵⁷ This seemingly insignificant step illustrates a great improvement in Sino-Indian communication and partnership regarding security matters. China's foreign ministry spokesman Liu Jianchao said of the exercises, "This cooperation between the two sides will further enrich our friendly relations and will further improve understanding between our armed forces."⁵⁸ While the joint exercises may be a small maneuver in military strategy, it nevertheless serves as a symbolic sign of friendship between China and India.

During Chinese defense minister Cao Gangchuan's visit to India in March 2004, Fernandes said, "Opportunities and challenges abound for

Sino-Indian relations in the coming decades. A normalized and stable bilateral relationship makes significant contribution to regional and global peace and security."⁵⁹ Just six years prior to this statement, Fernandes made little effort to hide his disregard for China. The top official's shift in attitude toward China exemplifies the friendship that now exists between the Asian giants. Yet the greater question for Sino-Indian relations is not whether the nations can compromise on intra-national conflicts, but whether they may ally against the greater contradiction posed by US hegemony.

Sino-Indian friendship, short of a strategic alliance

While from the theoretical perspective offered by power transition and balance of power it appears that the recent thaw serves as the alliance necessary to counterweigh US hegemony, neither theory makes the necessary distinction between strategic cooperation and strategic alliance. As Indian political analyst Dr. Subhash Kapila writes, there is an important difference between the two.⁶⁰ The current strategic cooperation between China and India reflects a mutual "coordination of views by both countries to the common challenges posed in the economic, political and security spheres."⁶¹ Strategic partnerships take this cooperative agreement one step further, increasing its applicability within the spheres.⁶² It is "an evolving alliance relationship," as Kapila describes it.⁶³ In order for China to address its top contradiction using the balance of power solution, it must establish the latter.

While signs of friendship have been promising, many analysts do not believe it will prove sustainable and expansive enough to form a Sino-Indian strategic partnership. Dr. Rollie Lal of the RAND Corporation wrote, "The joint [naval] exercises... serve as confidence building measures between the

two countries militaries. However, the exercises do not mark the beginning of a security alliance by any means.⁶⁴ The power transition and balance of power theories offer a framework for analyzing China's resentment toward the current international order and its desire to balance this power using the Maoist tactic of contradiction, yet the current thaw in Sino-Indian relations does not fit within this framework. Both theories miss an essential component of the current international order — economic competition. While the two nations have made great strides in strategic cooperation, the nations will always be held back from a more expansive strategic alliance due to their economic interests, many of which are ironically tied to the dominant power China and India oppose.

*The problem of Sino-Indian alliance-building:
economic competition*

Optimistic analysts of the recent thaw in Sino-Indian cooperation often point to the increased trade between the two nations in recent years. The volume of trade between China and India has increased from \$300 million just a decade ago to an estimated \$7 billion in 2004-05.⁶⁵ This trade is expected to rise to \$10 billion in 2005-06.⁶⁶ Interdependence between the two nations' economies promises to bring greater future cooperation. Yet a point these analyses miss is the role China and India's shared developmental challenges play in hindering a counterbalance against the United States. Along with the same challenges will come greater competition within this field. One area in which both China and India hope to increase development is through the rapidly growing information technology sector.

China's domination in manufacturing and in producing consumer goods is overshadowed by its desire to succeed in information technology, the

sector from which India derives its recent economic success. Kiran Karnik, president of India's National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM), claims that India aspires to become synonymous with IT services, "as France is to wines and Switzerland to watches."⁶⁷ The IT sector has had 40 percent annual growth since 1994, making up 20.4 percent of India's total export revenue in 2002-03.⁶⁸ In addition to the emphasis on English fluency in Indian education, some regard India's political situation as a beneficial environment in which the entrepreneurial skills needed to develop software companies can be honed.⁶⁹ The IT sector's recent success has also put India in the middle of a heated debate about outsourcing of jobs, demonstrating India's growing relevance in the international economy. Some of the strongest resentment India has experienced in its success in this high-end sector of the economy has been that of none other than the nation with whom it has just renewed its friendship — China.

While China continues its dominance in manufacturing and consumer goods, it understands this type of economic strategy will not take it far. While the manufacturing sector provides China with employment opportunities for the uneducated, this sector will not carry China into economic prosperity. China hopes to benefit from high-end, well-paying software jobs as India has done. As analysts predict, China poses a credible threat to Indian IT dominance. Rajat Mathur, an Indian software executive with WIPRO said, "India has moved up the value chain. This means that we are not competing on prices alone anymore but also quality. This paves the way for a cheaper Chinese workforce to reap a good harvest in time to come."⁷⁰ A cheaper Chinese labor force is among the top on the list. Chinese businesses are also beginning to understand

THE END OF THE UNIPOLAR ORDER?

the importance of English in establishing successful information technology jobs. English language training has increasingly become a component to Chinese schooling, partially in an effort to secure more software contracts.⁷¹ The closing of the gap between China and India is visible in the statistics. In financial year 2002-03, India's revenue in IT services export totaled \$9.5 billion and is estimated at \$12 billion in FY 2003-04, whereas China's revenue in 2001 totaled \$700 million and is expected to rise to \$5 billion in 2005.⁷²

The implications of this economic competition are great, especially since it relates to gaining the support of the dominant power of the international order. US corporations, in order to get lower costs, continue to export jobs overseas. IBM's decision in March to move 3,000 jobs to China and India illustrates the current economic triangle between the three nations.⁷³ Infosys Technologies, India's largest IT company, reported in 2003 that 73 percent of its \$750 million revenues came from the United States.⁷⁴ The need for both China and India to increase English fluency among citizens further emphasizes how both nations' software markets are directed at the United States. The United States' domination in software and technology will be one of its strengths in defying any balance of power promoted by China. Not only does the current and future Sino-Indian economic competition promise tensions between the two developing nations, but it signals a greater subservience to the current international order as both great powers vie for economic ties with the dominant power. While China and India may continue to despise the implications of the US world order, it will find a coalition to balance power with this dominant nation complicated by their economic interests.

The competition now witnessed between China

and India is to be expected. The two nations share the same challenges and, in many cases, the same strengths. Both nations boast incredible sources of labor and potential for economic power that they hope to use for the same goal: success in the high-end software sector. This competition will be detrimental in China's attempt to counterbalance the United States. In India, China may have found such a nation that shares its resentment toward the unipolar international order. Yet this one-sided share in interests will not prevail over the economic competition found between the nations and the economic interests each find in the United States. While this competition may never lead to outright war as the nations have witnessed in the past, it remains a significant hindrance for the current Sino-Indian strategic cooperation to evolve into a strategic alliance.

This study demonstrates the variety of interests Chinese and Indian relations involve. While recent steps toward strategic cooperation signal immense improvements from the mutual suspicion of the past four decades, the thaw does not reflect a move toward acting against the current unipolar international order. Despite the frameworks established by each theory, Sino-Indian relations are doomed by potent economic competition in high-level sectors such as information technology. This sector's importance has yet to be fully comprehended, but both China and India understand how crucial success in this market could be for their nations' development. For reasons both good and bad, this decision will override China's desire to counterweigh US hegemony.

The failure to form a Chinese-Indian strategic alliance reflects a shift in the traditional Maoist conception of contradiction. No longer does China hold the need to fend off a great contradiction before dealing with smaller ones. As China's role

in the international community has expanded in past decades, its foreign policy has become more malleable to the political, military and economic interests it holds in the world. The contradictions have lost their hierarchy, forcing China to address many concerns simultaneously. It has also made unlikely an expansive alliance with India for the sole purpose of balancing US hegemony.

The rift between theory and application

A look at Sino-Indian relations through the frameworks of power transition and balance of power theories establishes the inadequacies of judging current international relations solely through the lens of theory. In *Bridging the Gap: Theory and Practice in Foreign Policy*, Alexander L. George examines this inconsistency between theory and application. George wrote, “. . . theory must often struggle to catch up with realities,

theory generally does better explaining what has happened than predicting what will happen.”⁷⁵ While classical international relations theories offer plenty of valuable insight in the framework of the international order and the potential capabilities of a Sino-Indian alliance, neither succeeds in assessing the various roadblocks hindering current friendship from evolving into a more expansive alliance. As George indicates, theories succeed in framing the situation of Sino-Indian relations in the greater context of the international order. The realistic outcome of Sino-Indian relations falls short of that projected by contemporary international relations theory. The framework’s one-dimensional assessment of Sino-Indian relations discounts the all too important aspect of economic competition, one that will undoubtedly shape the friendship of the two nations in the future.



ENDNOTES

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