

India - China Conflict and the Question of Tibet: Issues and Regional Implications

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Abstract

Tibet is a central issue in the India-China relations that can be relate to security, politics, culture and economy of both countries. Ever since His Holiness Dalai Lama came to India and established the Tibetan Government in Exile, China consider it an act against its interest. On the other hand, the Government of India argues that it granted asylum to Dalai Lama along with 13000 Tibetan refugees on humanitarian ground and also with a condition that they would not carry out any “political activities” on Indian soil (Sali, 1998; 24). So far, Chinese are not ready to accept this and China continues to feel uneasy as a result of the presence and activities of Dalai Lama and his followers in India. It is clear that the Tibetan asylum brought negative impact in India-China relations which remain as a major hurdle in easing tensions between the two. It is also important that it has larger implications in the entire eastern Himalayan region

KEYWORDS: India China relations, Tibetan Refugees, Domestic and regional Politics in the Eastern Himalayas

Introduction

The root cause of tensions between China and India can be traced back to Simla Agreement of 1914 and the sanctity of McMahon line. This is evident that the Peoples' Republic of China signed border agreements with Myanmar and Nepal in 1960, Mongolia in 1962, and Pakistan in 1963. In fact, China's border deals with Myanmar and Pakistan run along the lines the British colonial officials had suggested. However, the China objected the Indian government's demand to formally recognize McMahon Line, a boundary solution foisted upon the Chinese by an imperialist British policy of aggression over China's Tibet region. The Chinese objection was not so much to the physical details of the McMahon Line location but to the legal foundations of the line itself (Norbu, 1996; 1997:1088).

After the establishment of Peoples Republic of China, The Indian policy to develop strong ties with immediate and strong neighbours for future prospects was behind this decision. However, when the Tibetan cause came into picture the whole idea of friendship was navigated to different directions; even the great slogan of mutual co-existence did not work. As the Chinese Communists neared their revolutionary victory, Nehru was rushing through a series of defence treaties with its other neighbouring countries which constituted Nehru's definition of a security zone where India would

tolerate no foreign interference¹. These treaties were supposed to represent India's strategic response to any future Communist takeover of Tibet.

China is a major military power who actively involved in Vietnam and Korean Wars. Many Indian leaders thought about future implications of Tibet being part of Peoples Republic of China. There was a larger concern in India to create an Independent Tibet as a buffer State between the two big states – India and China - to avoid direct interaction, which originally envisioned by the British Indian Empire. It is reflected in the words of B.R. Ambedkar, who have urged, “Instead of according recognition to China in 1949, had India accorded this recognition to Tibet, there would have been no Sino-Indian border conflict (Chaturvedi, 2004: 83).

Border conflict as a product of Simla Convention² 1913-14 seems as a big issue, which always comes in forefront of debate between India and China. The northeast region of India particularly Chinese territorial claim on some part of Arunachal Pradesh is a disturbing factor between India and China. China claims 90, 000 square kilometres of territory from India in the eastern sector; the total land area of Arunachal Pradesh is 83,743 sq. km hence forming the bulk of that territorial claim (Goswami, 2010: 2).

The Tawang region of Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh is the most questionable area in north east of India in terms of two countries relations. As, there is Tawang's link with Tibetan Buddhism and its religious and emotional significance for Tibetans. Tawang is the birthplace of the sixth Dalai Lama. Perched on a mist-covered spur in Tawang is the 327-year-old Galden Namgye Lhatse Monastery, Tibetan Buddhism's biggest monastery, after the Potala Palace in Lhasa (Ramachandran, 2008). When the present Dalai Lama fled Tibet in 1959, it was through Tawang that he made his way into India, taking refuge at the Tawang Monastery for over a week. In November 2006, just days before Chinese Premier Hu Jintao's state visit to India, Chinese Ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi stated, “In our position, the whole of the state of Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory. And Tawang is only one of the places in it. We are claiming all of that. That is our position” (Goswamy, 2010).

However, one can find more ambivalence in case of status of Tibet in the Nehruvian foreign policy. Nehru declared in the parliament on 4th May 1959 that ‘as far as the grant of political asylum to Dalai Lama is concerned, as a sovereign country, India had every right to do so and nobody could be judge of that except the Indian people. This ambivalence of the policy of Government of India regarding Tibetan cause can be understood in the cultural and strategic context of the region as well. The cultural affinity of Indian people with Tibetan people was not a new phenomenon and it was so important for government to consider people's sentiment in this regard. In the strategic realm, Indian military power in the region was not comparable with the Chinese

Regional Implications of the Tibet Question

The Tibetan crisis has been making critical impacts in regional security and of Sino-India bilateral relations. As the Tibetan Government in Exile is located in India, it is obvious that India is supporting Tibetans. At the same time, India always kept a low profile while

¹ During this time Nehru concluded several treaties especially with Bhutan (August 8, 1949), Nepal (July 31, 1950), and Sikkim (December 5, 1950).

² Simla convention was an agreement concluded among British India, Tibet and China on Tibetan sovereignty but China did not sign the agreement.

discussing this issue at international as well as domestic level. Whatever be the case, it is obvious that, as long as fires of Tibetan nationalism burn in Tibet and a Diaspora of over one lakh well educated and politically aware Tibetans get shelter in India, China will view India with grave suspicions (Ahmed, 2011). There are two fundamental concerns emerge here. One, it is pertinent that a country has to act according to their capability and national interest. Two, to sustain in present interdependent world, one cannot simply ignore the neighbouring country as it is difficult to ensure the survival in isolation. China is increasing its presence and investment in major infrastructure projects in Tibet which has been a cause of major security concern for India.

The long standing Sino-India border conflict is one of the issues directly related to Tibet. It is clear that if China could not have entered into Tibetan region, the question of boundary between India and China would not have come in to the picture. The confrontation between India and China began from the Indian official's discovery of the Chinese road at Aksai-Chin and the Tibetan uprising of 1959 and entry of Dalai Lama to India. In 1961, China reminded India about expiry of 1954 Treaty in six months and needs to be conducted new one with the hope that Tibetan area more formally included to Chinese sovereignty. India's refusal to negotiate Himalayan boundaries and detach itself completely from Tibet was tantamount to a Hindu declaration that the sacred Himalayas were non-negotiable. For its part, the Chinese refusal to recognize any pre-1949 border treaty or convention that Tibet signed with British India amounted to a firm declaration that Tibet, and any proposition that challenges even implicitly China's claim to Tibet, was un-negotiable (Norbu, 1996; 1997: 1088).

Many argue that the signing of Friendship Treaty of 1954 was a strategy of China to gain Indian support over their sovereignty on Tibet. In fact, China's territorial claims over the region were primarily from Tibetan-not Chinese-documents which would be valid only if India recognize Tibet as part of China (Norbu, 1996; 1997:1083). Therefore, the Sino-Indian War, which erupted into open fighting in October 1962, was in this sense a war over Tibet (Schaik, 2011: 240). India was under the influence of Nehruvian idealistic foreign policy and at that point of time, there was not much concern about power politics driven by military resources in Indian strategic thinking. Indian dilemma in decision-making is very clear while studying the historical background of Tibet related issues.

The very first incident that taken place in post independence India-China bilateral relations which attracted the interest of international community was 1962 border war between India and China. It is true that the Chinese political interest and Indian ignorance on military power were some of the issues that lead India to a shameful situation. Beside, the Tibetan issue or Tibetan Government in Exile that functioning in Indian Territory was another major factor that pushed the Sino-India war of 1962. In the wake of war, there had been several appeals from various political quarters to the Government of India to give recognition to the Tibetan Government in Exile and the inclusion of escaped Tibetan military in the Indian army. Speaking in parliament on 10 December 1963, Nehru reaffirmed the government's determination not to allow an 'émigré government' in India because, he said, 'it could mean India's undertaking to free the whole of Tibet, it is a large undertaking for which India was not prepared.

Throughout the 1950s, Nehru demonstrated his serious commitment to this doctrine. In February 1951, he established the North and North-Eastern Defence Committee, visited NEFA (1952), Sikkim and Bhutan (1958), and Nepal (1954 and 1959). In his

public statements, in August and December 1959, Nehru offered open support in defence of Nepal, Bhutan, and Sikkim in case of Chinese invasion (Norbu, 1997: 1080). In fact, the Tibetan cause compelled to think strategically to both countries. Chinese military incursion in Indian territory in 1962 brought big changes in the Indian traditional understanding of security³.

By understanding the situation, China began to increase its ties with Pakistan in the northern and western front to counter India in the same way what Chanakya have said 'enemy's enemy is friend'. India and Pakistan are not in good relation since independence and been fought series of wars. Kashmir has been the crux of rivalry between India and Pakistan. India contends that the Kashmir issue was settled in 1954, when the constituent assembly of Kashmir voted for accession to India, thereby exercising the Kashmiri people's right of self-determination' (Garver, 1996: 326). In this issue, China supported Pakistan's position and advocated for the right of self-determination of people of Kashmir. The issue can also be related to the Sino-Indian war of 1962. The Chinese support to Pakistan can be understood as a strategy to weaken Indian position in the region. In short, the 1962 war between India and China had direct relation with Tibetan issue⁴.

It seems hard to resolve the conflict between India and China when the matter of border issue comes in the dialogue. There are number of efforts had been made to resolve the question of border but the proposed solution of both countries are seems so grounded in national interest and each are supported by some historical evidence. In 1993, the two countries signed an Agreement On Peace and Tranquillity in the Border Regions during the visit of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to Beijing. That agreement and its successors in 1995 and 1996 froze the disputed border in the Himalayas by designating it the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and establishing a system for commercial might arise (Jha, 2010: 6).

To a certain extend, the result of these agreement found fruitful in terms of economic aspect of two countries as the volume of trade began to increase. It is also realised the border issue has been always there though two countries are trying to maintain good collaborations in the field of trade. The political problem like, in May 2007, China denied a visa to Ganesh Koyu, an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer from Arunachal Pradesh, who was to be a part of a 107 IAS officer study team visit to Beijing and Shanghai. China pointed out that Koyu is a Chinese citizen since he belongs to Arunachal Pradesh and hence could visit China without a visa (Goswamy, 2010). It signifies a very strong stand over their claim on the area of Arunachal Pradesh and for India; it was a kind of slap, which compel to think about the strength of her own. No matter, it could be any kind of statement but it is necessary to analyse in different context for the safe future of the region.

It is a general trend that the Chinese always provoke some kind of dissatisfaction when some Indian leaders make plan to visit Arunachal Pradesh. They criticised the visit

³ India was helpless in this situation and despite being a major non-align country, it was compelled to go for United State's help

⁴ His holiness Dalai Lama also highlighted this in his address in US congress in 1987. He pointed out that, 'the Tibetan national uprising against the Chinese and my flight to India in 1959, tensions between China and India escalated into the border war in 1962 (Dalai Lama Address to Members of the United States). Congress Washington, 1987).

of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and visit of Tibetan spiritual leader Dalai Lama. In October 2009, China expressed deep dissatisfaction when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh visited Arunachal Pradesh during the campaign for the State assembly elections (Goswamy, 2010). It shows that China still not so much comfortable with India regarding territorial dispute. In this context Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Ma Zhaoxu said "We demand the Indian side address China's serious concerns and not trigger disturbance in the disputed region so as to facilitate the healthy development of China-India relations,"⁵. In this context, Chinese concern may be towards Tibet issue as the region is adjacent to Tibetan area and the people of both regions are culturally more closed.

In June 2009, China tried to block India's request for a US \$ 2.9 billion loan from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as the request included US \$ 60 million for a flood management, water supply, and sanitation project in Arunachal Pradesh. It shows they want this region should remain far from some modern development and it can propagate some kind of wrong information that Indian Government is not concern about the people of the region. Again, in November 2009 China openly protested the Dalai Lama's visit to Arunachal Pradesh when Jiang Yu, the spokeswoman for China's foreign ministry asserted that "China's stance on the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' is consistent. We firmly oppose Dalai visiting the so-called 'Arunachal Pradesh' (Goswamy, 2010). From the Indian side Minister of State for External Affairs Shashi Tharoor denied the Chinese newspaper's report and said The Dalai Lama is free to travel anywhere in India. It is clear that Dalai Lama have no permission to make some political approach in Indian Territory though Chinese were very doubtful on visit of His Holiness because this place is the birthplace of sixth Dalai Lama and people have very deep sentiment on Buddhism.

The Chinese were opposing Indian leader's visit to the area so it was certain that they could oppose the visit of Dalai Lama. In the visit of Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony on February 2012 to Arunachal Pradesh also got, criticisms from Chinese side. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokes-man Hong Lei had "asked India to work with China to maintain peace and stability in border areas," state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Mr Antony also responded by saying the fact that like Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh was an integral part of India and as Defence Minister it was both his right and duty to visit the State and all other border States. From such incidence what can be understood is that Chinese are very keen to maintain their territorial claim of Arunachal Pradesh and in particular Tawang region.

Chinese scholars have argued that Tawang is central to Beijing's control over Tibet (Ramachandran, 2008). The cultural affinity of the people of Tawang with people of Tibetan area has been a headache of Chinese Government. In fact when there is no proper consensus into the matter of nation building it will be too difficult to grasp the success. In the Chinese case, they are trying to influence the people of Tibetan area to accept themselves as part of greater China by extending different kind of developmental project. However, the very fact of Tibetan people's interaction with the people of Indian Territory, there is always possibilities of increase anti-Chinese feeling. The idea is that, the Tibetan government in exile is working for unity of Tibetan people for their cause based from Indian Territory. Further, it is interesting to note that that Tibetan themselves

⁵*The Indian Express*, October 13, 2009

are denying Arunachal as part of Tibet what Chinese claims⁶. Indian scholars have been arguing that Chinese claim over Tibet is based on ecclesiastical similarity of people of Tawang and Tibet and one cannot extend territorial claim because of religious affinity.⁷

Impact of developments in Tibet on Himalayan States

Tibetan issue had made some impact in the entire Himalayan region, especially in the Kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim. These three kingdoms are bordering with Tibet and they had close cultural ties with Tibet. Buddhism was a major institution that brought the people of these Kingdoms together.

Sikkim, before 1975, was a protectorate kingdom of India. It has very long historical ties with Tibet in terms of politics, culture and economy. Before Sikkim merged with the Indian Union in 1975, Beijing had publicly accepted the 19th-century borderline between Sikkim and Tibet.⁸ During Chinese invasion, many Tibetans were entered to India through Sikkim and some of them stayed in Sikkim and engaged in various occupation mainly construction work. However, the main question is why Sikkim matters in Tibetan issue and in India-China relations? China did not accept Sikkim as a part of India for more than three decades after its merger with India in 1975.

Sikkim's relations with Tibet were friendlier during the time of Kings. Buddhism is the main religion in Tibet and in the same way Sikkim was also ruled by Buddhist dynasty for almost three hundred years. It is no more a concern of Tibet and Sikkim but it became the matter of concern for India and China after accession of both to two countries. In the issue of recognition of Sikkim as part of India, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of 2003 brought crucial changes in Chinese position. Vajpayee shifted India's long-standing position on Tibet from an "autonomous" region within China to "part of the territory" of China. He linked his Tibet concession with supposed Chinese flexibility on Sikkim. Having turned Sikkim from a non-issue into a bilateral issue, he claimed credit for beginning "the process by which Sikkim will cease to be an issue in India-China relations" (Hindustan Times, 6 June 2008).

Consequent to his visit, India and China concluded a border trade protocol to add a border crossing between Sikkim and Tibet Autonomous Region. The two Prime Ministers appointed Special Representatives to explore from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship and the framework of a boundary settlement. India throws the Tibet card in getting recognised Sikkim as integral part of the country. On the other side, it formally accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet. The strategy was successful and finally China recognised Sikkim as part of India.

⁶Although during a visit to Tawang in 2003, the Dalai Lama is said to have obliquely referred to Tawang as part of Tibet, he has acknowledged several times the validity of the McMahon Line as per the Simla Agreement (under which Tawang is Indian territory) and recently said that Arunachal is a part of India (Ramachandran 2008, *Asia Times*).

⁷Beijing's claim to Arunachal Pradesh or more specifically to a slice of it, Tawang, flows from Tibet's putative historical or ecclesiastical ties with Arunachal (Ramachandran 2008, *Asia Times*).

⁸Priemer Zhou said, The Sino-Sikkimese Border were stipulated in a treaty in 1890, it is not a problem. But the Chinese side has not recognized India's right to represent Bhutan and Sikkim (Memorandum of conversation 1: Director Zhang Wenji and Indian Ambassador Parthasarathy, 1961, 17 July -

www.claudearpi.net/maintenance_uploaded_pics_Parthasarathy_1961).

The case of Sikkim's border Nathu La pass also carries the same question and particularly re-opening of the erstwhile traditional trade-marts between India, Tibet and China. The issue became much more complicated with the disappearance of one party, namely Tibet, as a buffer state. The gradual improvement in the relations between India and China and the revival of border trade would be of mutual benefit particularly to the inhabitants of the border regions. In the course of time, since 2006, there have been initiated border trade from Nathula pass of Sikkim and Tibetan autonomous region. It is emerged as a Confidence Building Measure between two countries. However, it is not so sure to understand it is really benefiting the people of border area. The security concern is always there as in 2008, there were 65 military incursions had been taken place from Chinese side in the border area of Sikkim with Tibetan autonomous region (Ramachandran, 2008).

The problem of border is interrelated whether it is Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh or Ladakh because these are all the products of 1914 Simla convention. When the question of Sikkim border comes, it affects the whole region. The other main factor is the Chinese dream to consolidate their hold over Tibet and reduce their tensions on Tibetan nationalism. What has irked India about the incursions into Sikkim is that China, after virtually acknowledging Sikkim to be a part of India, is bringing this part of the boundary back into the border dispute.

China's reopening of the Sikkim front and its increased military pressure on India along all sectors of the disputed border appears to be aimed at pushing India to concede to its demands in Arunachal Pradesh, more specifically Tawang. In addition, its claims over Tawang are part of its bid to cement control over Tibet. Tawang is situated in the south-west of Arunachal Pradesh. It shares border with Bhutan in the west and Tibet at its north. Nestling in the eastern Himalayas at an altitude of 3,400 meters, Tawang is known for its stunning view of the mountains, alpine weather and Buddhist monasteries (Ramachandran, 2008).

It also seems that India believes on that the economic cooperation will lead to a political solution to the problem. On economic ties between the two countries, in 2003 Vajpayee said, "India and China are among the world's fastest growing economies. The basic structure of our economies is not dissimilar, though we have chosen different paths towards development."(*CHINA Daily*, 23 June 2003). In the same way, India had worries on the sentiment of Dalai Lama that the declaration of India, Tibet as integral part of China, may hurt his sentiment.⁹ Hence, it is clear that India wants to maintain friendly relations with both China and Tibetan people who are demanding for their rights.

Chinese also seems interested in terms of economic cooperation between two countries. In 2004, then Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao said in the ASEAN Conference; "We are happy about the rapid growth of India's economy and its continuously enhanced influence in the world." Commenting on the border issue, Wen noted that, "We believe that if abiding by the principle of equal consultation, mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, the two sides can find solutions to this issue through sincere negotiations" (Athwal, 2008: 109). However, there is no clear point highlighted regarding

⁹ The Indian Foreign Minister, Yashwant Sinha, has said this will not affect the status of the Dalai Lama, who leads a Tibetan government-in-exile based in the Indian town of Dharamsala.(BBC NEWS 23 June 2003)

the solution of the problem that hampers the friendship of two emerging countries of world politics.

The PRC has been keen to have good relations with Bhutan and for them it is necessary to have good sentiment of Tibetan people develop relations with Bhutan. Beijing rapidly put aside the alleged Chinese historical sovereignty over Bhutan and preferred to use diplomacy rather than force. The outbreak of a revolt against the Chinese in Tibet in 1954-1955 had direct consequences on Sino-Bhutan relations in the general framework of growing tension between China and India. Bhutan is now become buffer state between India and China after the takeover of Tibet by China. Both countries have been trying to influence Bhutan by extending various support and through their diplomacy.

For India, it is the matter of concern from the security point of view. It is also important to note that Bhutan and Tibet have almost same kind of culture and religious practices. From China's point of view, resuming trade with Bhutan is part of an overall strategy in the Himalayas, which has been framed in the global - trade is a key element of that strategy. Even, Bhutan and China also have border problem and they have been engaged in talks regarding the solutions of the issue. The Indian factor also remains a key element in Bhutan's China policy while Bhutan and China have common interest in the normalisation of their bilateral relations. The Chinese interest in the region can be economic but it is foolish to ignore the security and strategic interest behind such policies.

In the context Sino-India relations, Chinese and Indian strategies reflect their respective desires to expand their relative influence over Nepal at each other's expense. Both powers display a lack of satisfaction with the current status quo and have pursued strategies that are aimed at maximizing their share of regional power. After, the Chinese invasion of Tibet, India also strategically brought Nepal also in its defensive boundaries. The involvement of China in Nepal seems more active as it has been extending different kind of aid to that country. The political change in Nepal and popularity of Maoist contributes to this. The threat is more serious if viewed in conjunction with the Maoists of Nepal and the Maoist-Naxalite faultline in India, especially if the Maoists gain total control in Nepal (Katoch 2010: 81).

The development of road infrastructure in Tibet, the construction of the railway line to Lhasa and Chinese plans to extend railway line from Lhasa to the Indian border and connect its road network in Tibet with the Nepalese road network are all indications of Chinese efforts to expand its hold in the region, including Nepal, in the changing context (Aiyengar 2010; 17). China now has a standard gauge railway line up to Lhasa with a capacity of up to eight trains per day and plans for this is being extended up to Nepal and the Chumbi Valley (Bakshi 2010: 60). China has been doing road construction in Nepal, and the Chinese own numerous three-star hotels which creates little doubt of covert PLA presence in Nepal (Katoch 2010: 85). Besides, China has deepened ties with Nepal's army and police, and is helping to build a new road to the Tibetan frontier¹⁰.

¹⁰ *China And India Relations: Trade, Border Conflicts And Easing An Increasing Tensions*
<http://factsanddetails.com/china.php?itemid=287&catid=8&subcatid=52>

Myanmar in India China Scuffle

In India China relations, Myanmar cannot be kept aside because of both Countries' interest towards Myanmar. The strategic policy of two countries is in process of making hold in Myanmar. Since September 1988, when the military brutally suppressed pro-democracy protests and killed thousands of people under military the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) effectively put an end to Myanmar's neutrality by moving closer to China (Malik,1994:139).

India was not much interested in active involvement in Myanmar because of a political reason ever since the military Junta has been in power from almost two decades. However, since early 1990s, the regional strategic policies began to change in both countries. Myanmar is a potential continental gateway to mainland Southeast Asia for both India and China and therefore ignore or oppose Myanmar for a simple reason that military junta was in power would be a mistake for India especially in a situation when China swiftly increasing its presence in the region. Therefore, India reassesses and redefines its Myanmar policy in order to protect its geopolitical interests in the region mainly in East Asia. India is more and more aware of the viability of a Sino-Burmese partnership started as early as 1989, when cheap Chinese goods began flooding into markets in India's Northeast. China's assistance in rebuilding crumbling roads, bridges, and other infrastructure throughout Myanmar was perceived by Indian strategists as being a potential threat. They feared the aid could give China access to India's Northeast. Second, India worried that China could establish a maritime bridgehead on the Indian Ocean near vital sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) in the Andaman Sea by upgrading port facilities and naval bases along the Burmese coastline. This could potentially threaten India's maritime security. Third, China gave the Burmese military an opportunity to increase its strength and modernize its equipment at very low cost by signing a \$1 billion deal in 1989 and a \$400 million agreement in 1994. As a result, the Tatmadaw acquired new weaponry and increased its manpower to about 400,000 soldiers in the early 1990s. India lunched its Look East Policy in 1991 as a response to increasing Chinese involvement in the region. Finally, India was prompted to change its policy toward Myanmar after suspicions arose about Chinese plans to set up a surveillance network along the Burmese coast, especially on Great and Little Coco Islands in the Andaman archipelago. The alleged plans included the reported construction of sensitive monitoring facilities (Egreteau, 2008: 944.)

It is a fact that Myanmar and India had been in not good relations since the independence. The insurgence of northeast India has been established number of bases in the area of Myanmar and there are some cases that Myanmar government have supported them to intensify their movement. However, India became very keen to develop good relations with Myanmar when it realise the increasing play of China in Myanmar. There is several economic interest of India in making good relations with Myanmar, as it is the gateway to ASEAN, which is the potential economy in the region. Myanmar have good source of natural gas and oil also. And, it is also possible that, with the help of Myanmar, Indian government can make easy to tackle its northeast insurgence. Beside all these, to counter China are the foremost goal of India. It has learned lesson from the history of Tibet. Tibet and Myanmar have been two buffer states between India and China. Tibet fell in the 1950s, which led to a war in 1962 (Malik, 1994:144).

In fact, India was not at all interested in Myanmar prior to Chinese strategic enhancement in the region. The fact is that the historical evidence of Tibet and increasing Chinese influence in Myanmar compelled India to redefine its relations with Myanmar. Indian economic, political and security cooperation with Myanmar obviously have made some impact in Chinese strategy of being hegemonic in the East Asian region. India wants Myanmar should remain as a peaceful buffer state between two countries which ensure the security of the region as it does not want to see the situation in Arunachal or in Ladakh (Malik, 2008:141). Tibetization of Myanmar is seen as detrimental to India's security interests because Myanmar also provides the Chinese with an invasion route to India (ibid: 144).

North East India, Tibet and China: Complex Engagements

The North East region of India with adjacent boundary of China is a trouble rampant area since independence of India. There are number of groups which are active in this region with their demands varying from independence to self-rule. The problem itself is very complex in the sense that there are different groups and they have their own kind of demand to Central Government of India. British did not impose their direct rule in this region during colonial period. After the British, the post-colonial Indian state sought to integrate the whole region into the “national mainstream” provoking violent opposition against federal control and assimilation (Bhaumik, 2007: 4). Since then, to meet their demand, the insurgents have been practicing violent means.

The Naga insurgency was the first, to raise the banner of rebellion and also started providing arms training and other logistic support to outfits such as the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), formed in April 1979 to fight for a sovereign, socialist Assam'. The other thing, which is difficult to tackle the problem by Indian Government, is that, in fact, ninety eight percent of the Northeast is contiguous to the international border, mainly China, which allows insurgent groups to get sanctuaries in Bhutan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and even China. Therefore, whenever India government tried to suppress the rebels, they began to search help from outside the boundary of India and even they established the bases in some neighbouring states.

Now, the question come relation of Tibet factor in the activities of Northeast insurgency. The Tibetans asylum in India and 1962 border war deteriorated relations between India and China. India's northeast region bordering with Tibet also faced troubles. The insurgents obviously use this opportunity to counter the Indian army. China also used this opportunity to create more troubles to India by extending different kind of material and moral support to insurgent. In order to fishing in troubled water of India's Northeast region, China gave economic, political and military aid to anti-Indian elements active in the region (Sali, 1998: 31).

China's contentious support to Nagas and Mizos in troubled States in India's North East was a direct interference in India's internal affairs (Pokharna, 1999: 39). The core leadership of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), an insurgent outfit active in Manipur, was trained in China. Though the ethnic rebel armies of the Naga and the Mizo hills had received military training in China before them, the Chinese only tried to politicise a few Naga leaders, such as Thuingaleng Muivah, the present General Secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN). Muivah had some exposure to Marxist-Leninist ideology before he led the first batch of Naga rebels to China in 1966, at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.

The Chinese supports to insurgence really strengthen the insurgents which affected Indian Territory more severely. China trained and armed several batches of Naga, Mizo and Meitei since 1966 but in some development of India-China relations in 1980s stopped the help from Chinese side. In the international politics, states are always tried to promote national interest and that can be visible in Chinese policy. After the visit of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988, one can see visible changes in Chinese foreign policy towards India. Actually, it made a wide range change in two countries relations. The visit ended with some serious discussion on working for peace in the Asia, cooperation in science and technology and setting of working group for border dispute. The outcome of the agreement is yet not seen but it has a direct impact in relation of north east insurgent with China.

Chinese Developmental Projects in Tibet: Concerns for India

China has been extending infrastructure development in Tibetan Autonomous Region, which is also a matter of concern for India on security ground. From a general understanding, it is simply development of the region but it is also important to think about the hidden strategic goals of China in such infrastructure development initiatives. Nevertheless, it is clear that China continues to feel uneasy because of the presence and activities of Dalai Lama and his followers in India. The former PRC Premier Wen Jiabao's concern, expressed without naming India, about the functioning of 'Tibetan Exiled Government abroad' against China's interests, illustrates this point (Rajan, 2007).

China aims to eradicate the anti Chinese ethnic feeling in Tibetan area by providing economic facilities and infrastructural development. Like Deng Xiaoping, Hu Jintao and Shi Jin Ping also advocated a policy of generating economic prosperity to eradicate separatism in Tibet and Xinjiang. Hailing the infrastructural development in the TAR as a national security strategy, Hu stated, "Rapid economic development is the fundamental condition for realizing the interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet and also the basic guarantee for greater ethnic unity and continued stability there (Chansoria, 2001: 9).

Ever since Chinese takeover of Tibet, they try to develop various kinds of modern industries and communication infrastructure in the Tibetan soil, despite the fact that many Tibetan people oppose the project. Tibetans believe that these projects may create environmental problems in the peaceful region. They also highlights that, through economic means, Chinese are trying to reduce sentiment of Tibetan over their land. On the other hand, China denies the claim of Tibet as separate state and therefore for them develop the region is part of the overall development of the country. Beijing's national leaders blame outside forces – particularly the Tibetans' exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama – for stirring up trouble¹¹. In this context, one can also think about the impact of it in bilateral relations of two countries as maximum numbers of exiled peoples are in India including the Spiritual leader.

As a result of excessive Chinese investment and modernisation policies, the GDP of the TAR grew at 14 percent in 2007, much more than China's average (Chansoria, 2001:10). This rapid growth rate is attributed to readjustment of the existing and introduction of new industries; heavy investments by the central government in infrastructure; and reforms in state-owned enterprises and government organisations. To implement its development plans, the Chinese government has undertaken certain

¹¹ <http://tibet.net/2012/02/10/china-lock-down-seals-off-tibetan-unrest/>

development projects like road, rail and air network, Fuel, Oil and Lubricants (FOL) Pipelines and communications (Chansoria, 2011:10). Beside these, China has been developing huge number of transportation infrastructure like roads and railways in Tibetan Autonomous Region. On the military front, China's development of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, its proposed extension to prefectures bordering India, and the deployment of additional border defence regiments and mountain brigades have strengthened the PLA's position.

Border violations in the region along the Sino-Indian border which were traditionally not been prone to instabilities, such as the Sikkim-Tibet boundary and the Indian state of Uttarakhand made serious issues. Factors contributing to the need for serious concern are the all-weather expressway that China has built right up to the border at Nathu La and its plans to extend the Golmud- Lhasa Railway to Yadong, across Nathu La. This will, facilitate the movement of military goods and personnel and rail-mobile missiles¹².

In the context of infrastructural development on the Tibetan autonomous region and precisely up to border area, have two kinds of interpretations. Firstly, it is the matter of border security threat to India. It is undeniable that if there is easy accessibility of transportation the military mobility also will be very easy whenever fell important to deploy. Secondly, it can be understood more economic interest of the country. India had proposed the border trade long back in 1994 but it was started in 2006. It is interesting though that while China opened Yadong/Nathu La only in 2006, they had years earlier constructed an all-weather two-lane highway up to Yadong as well as permanent trading huts, customs buildings and check posts. There are plans to extend the railway from Lhasa to Yadong by 2015 (ibid). This will facilitate transportation of goods and passengers. China's construction activity suggests that Beijing has planned to develop Yadong as a major trade port through which it can supply goods to Sikkim, Bhutan, and India's north-east as well as onwards via sea to Bangladesh and Myanmar. But, on the other hand, in the Indian side, there is no high concern about the infrastructure development whether it is in Sikkim or Arunachal Pradesh.

Conclusion

In fact the Tibetan issue has been kind of obstacle in bilateral relations of two countries. However, it has both negative and positive side in terms of domestic and international politics, culture and security. India have been providing asylum to Tibetan spiritual leader and maximum number of exile Tibetan people in comparison to other countries. On the other hand, India also needs good ties with its immediate neighbour strong and emerging world power China because of social, political, economic as well as security reasons. Therefore, India has been in difficult situation ever since the problem arose and it has not done clear argument regarding Tibetans cause.

Despite the fact that the Sino - Indian relations itself is very complicated, Tibetan community may have expectations of vocal position from Indian side on their cause.

¹² Jayadeva Ranade; *Nathula and the Sino-Indian Trade: Understanding the sensitivities in Sikkim* (<http://www.ipcs.org/issue-brief/india/nathu-la-the-sino-indian-trade-understanding-the-sensitivities-in-182.html>)

India also has its own domestic problem of economy, security and social disparity and politics. However, it cannot simply ignore the one and hold another its own national interest and it is difficult to have long-term good relations of two countries until and unless solved the Tibet problem in mutual agreement.

The issue of Tibet has led to engagement of two countries in the regional level. The Sino-Indian competition is very apparent in regional level since the problem came into existence. The Indian leader's initiative of defence related treaties with Bhutan, Nepal and Sikkim can be considered as a direct impact of Tibet factor. In turn, Chinese also maintained close relation with Pakistan to balance India. The Chinese support to Northeast insurgents is an issue that make easy to understand the Chinese behaviour towards India in terms of security. In the context of regional impact of Tibetan issue between India-China relations, Myanmar factor is also seems critical as India was reluctant to make good relations with Myanmar earlier but the increasing Chinese influence in the region compelled India to change its policy towards Myanmar.

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