

# CHAPTER V

## Chapter-V

### Institutional Resolution of Conflict

The Sino-Indian normalization process had picked up momentum in the late 1980s<sup>1</sup>. It may be recalled that the process of negotiated settlement of Sino-Indian boundary dispute had started during Indira Gandhi's regime in 1981. Eight rounds of talks were held between 1981 and 1987. But as a result of those negotiated talks, no breakthrough was made. It was during Rajiv Gandhi's China visit in 1988, that both nations decided to set up a **Joint Working Group (JWG)**, which was to forge a fair and reasonable solution to the border issue<sup>2</sup> and to expedite negotiation between the two countries.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent establishment of Joint Group on Economic Relations and Trade, Science and Technology (JEG) consisting of diplomatic and military officials under the JWG contributed to the deepening of understanding between two countries.<sup>4</sup> The JWG was to be chaired by the Foreign Secretary on the Indian side and the Vice-Foreign Minister from the Chinese side. In some ways therefore, JWG was an advancement from the previous mechanism in that it enjoyed joint mandate. Furthermore, the JWG was also vested with the task of dispelling tensions along the border and initiating Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) designed to maintain peace and tranquillity along the border areas.<sup>5</sup>

During 1989-2005, fifteen rounds of talks had been taken place, out of which, ten JWG meetings were held from 1989-1997 except 1992. Remaining five were held after a brief breakdown in the process of Sino-Indian rapprochement in the year 1998 due to India's nuclear test. To facilitate the JWG's work, the 1993 treaty established an Expert's Group for the purpose of making a closer scrutiny of each side's position and clarifications on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It comprises of diplomats, military officials, cartographers, etc. from both countries who advise the JWG on the boundary question and review the working of the CBMs. The Experts Group on both sides held twelve meetings by 2002.<sup>6</sup> The JEG met eight times in New Delhi

and Beijing alternatively. All these were the efforts made by both countries in order to resolve the boundary problem.

### **Wu Xueqian's Visit:**

The Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Xueqian's visit on March 12, 1989 was essentially part of the confidence building exercise that had set off in the wake of Rajiv Gandhi's visit in December 1988. He met several ministers to discuss some concrete ideas of cooperation and identify areas in which specific projects could be introduced. On the border issue, he said that the Chinese government was eager to reach a fair and reasonable settlement of the issue. He hoped that so long as the two sides conducted friendly consultations in a spirit of mutual understanding and accommodation, a mutually acceptable solution could be found to the boundary question.<sup>7</sup> He said that the two sides would have to intensify efforts in the coming year because no meaningful negotiations on the border issue could be taken up before that. Referring to the meetings of JWG in the month of July, he further said that it would be unrealistic to expect the problem to be solved through only one or two rounds.<sup>8</sup>

### **First Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The first meeting of JWG was held at Beijing from June 30 to July 4, 1989 at the height of Tiananmen incident when the US and other western countries had imposed sanctions on China for ruthless suppression of the student movement.<sup>9</sup> The meeting centred on the theme of working out measures to ensure peace and tranquillity along the LAC, and the two sides agreed that military experts from both the countries would work out measures to ensure this.<sup>10</sup> Both sides exchanged views on the improvement of bilateral relations and regional as well as international issues of common interest.<sup>11</sup>

Considerable progress was made in the fields of science and technology. The border issue remained unresolved. The discussions were exploratory in nature but expected to balance the interest involved in it. The broad principles on which each side was expected to proceed have already been evolved in areas of mutual respect for Panchsheel, history, custom and public sentiments. What

they did not agree was the principle of “give and take”.<sup>12</sup> The main focus was on science and technology. No specific discussion took place on the border issue. In spite of that it was a good beginning in the direction of peace process.

On July 8, 1989, it was announced that India and China had agreed to undertake confidence building exercise and push the process of normalization of relations between the two countries.<sup>13</sup> Joint group on Trade, Economic relations, Science and Technology (JEG) held its first meeting in New Delhi on September 18, 1989. Both sides stressed the vast potential ties and cooperation in the areas of science and technology.<sup>14</sup> With a view to keep up the momentum generated by two high level political contacts, Chinese Vice-Premier Wu Xueqian came to New Delhi on October 11, 1989. He had extensive talks with External Affairs Minister, PV Narasimha Rao and Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi. Wu stated that, “we can not only strengthen our cooperation and make up for each other’s deficiencies in many areas, including economy, science, technology, culture and education, but also enhance, our consultations on the North-South dialogue, South-South cooperation, and number of other international issues... as long as the two sides conduct friendly consultations in a spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, a mutually acceptable solution can be found.”<sup>15</sup>

In November 1989, there was change in Government. Janata Dal came to power, VP Singh become the Prime Minister of India. The Janata Dal government did not bring any change in India’s China policy initiated by the previous governments. I.K. Gujral, the Indian External Affairs Minister, actively pursued a policy that would improve India’s relations with its neighbour.<sup>16</sup> The change in governments did not affect the course of Sino-Indian ties. There were a series of high-level exchanges between the two countries.<sup>17</sup> The President of India R. Venkataraman stated in his annual address to the Parliament on March 12, 1990 that, “the pace of diplomatic exchanges is being accelerated, contributing to the development of mutually beneficial cooperation on the basis of Panchsheel. The foreign Minister of China will be visiting India soon to carry forward the dialogue. We will

continue our efforts to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question, consistent with our national interests".<sup>18</sup>

The Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen visited India in March 1990.<sup>19</sup> Qian's visit coincided with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and China. In his talks with his Indian counterpart, I.K. Gujral, Qian agreed that the development of bilateral relations in other fields would create a favourable climate and conditions for a fair and reasonable settlement of the boundary question.<sup>20</sup> On border dispute Qian repeated his country's desire to reach a settlement through mutual understanding and mutual accommodation.<sup>21</sup> He told journalists that he was impressed by the consensus in India on the importance of maintaining good relations with China. The present government's position on China has also been appreciated.<sup>22</sup> The most important point made by Qian on March 23 related to Kashmir, he emphasised the need for a peaceful solution to the Kashmir problem through mutual consultations between India and Pakistan by avoiding the internationalisation of the Kashmir issue.

Speaking in the Parliament on April 9, 1990 Shri I K Gujral said that, "in the broader context, the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister last month resulted in a better understanding of the perceptions of both sides on matters of international and regional concern. This was important because both of us face similar problem as continental societies.....Exchange of views and better understanding are themselves of no mean value".<sup>23</sup>

### **Second Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The joint working group (JWG) held its second meeting on August 31-September 1, 1990 in New Delhi. Indian Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey represented the Indian side, while China sent Vice Foreign Minister Qi Huaiyan. Both sides agreed on a mechanism under which their military personnel would meet from time to time at an appropriate level to maintain peace in the border area. At the end of the two days discussion, both side expressed the hopes that by working in a sincere and forward looking manner it

would be possible as well as for maintaining tranquility in the border areas.<sup>24</sup> The two sides also discussed ways of further improving the bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and international issues. They noted with satisfaction the growing interaction between the two countries in various fields, including exchanges at the political level.<sup>25</sup>

The overall outcome of the JWG's discussions was as follows – no appreciable progress on the boundary issue, and the emergence of a desire between the two countries to strengthen bilateral ties, besides maintaining peace at the border. They decided to increase the number of scholarships for Indian and Chinese students for higher education in respective countries.<sup>26</sup> This, however, could not make a headway, nonetheless a shared understanding on border issue increased.

The political upheavals in India did not break flow of diplomatic exchange between India and China. V.C. Shukla, the External Affairs Minister in Prime Minister Chandra Shekar's government visited China. The scheduled meeting of joint committee for promoting Sino-Indian trade and technological cooperation JEG was held in Beijing. In order to promote bilateral border trade, both sides agreed to open Tiabian on Uttaranchal - Tibet border as a trading point. This was the first trading point being opened after the 1962 war.<sup>27</sup>

The Sikkim question, for example, has been a divisive issue between the two nations. The integration of the Sikkim state into India in 1975 was deeply resented by China. Beijing saw it as part of India's hegemonic intentions in South Asia and refused to accept the integration. India saw this response as China's attempt to intervene in the subcontinent. From the mid 1950s, India and China began to find a way of removing the misperceptions about Sikkim.<sup>28</sup>

The nineties unfolded with profound transformation in international politics. Amidst the rapid changing world scenario, both India and China desired a stable relation to face uncertain and ever changing pattern of international politics. The combined effort of international circumstances,

regional politics and domestic compulsion, pushed India and China on a closer and irreversible path of rapprochement.

On February 21, 1991 the President of India R. Venkataraman addressed a joint session of the Parliament and stated that, “we have continued the process of seeking a better understanding with China. Our bilateral cooperation has grown and we have also begun to consult each other more closely on international issues. Negotiations in the Joint Working Group are continuing with a view to resolving the boundary questions in a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable manner. We believe that closer cooperation between India and China will be in the interest of peace and stability in Asia and the world.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Third Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The third meeting of the JWG was held on May 13, 1991 at Beijing. The two sides further enhanced their understanding of each others positions and agreed to continue the process.<sup>30</sup> The two sides exchanged views on maintaining peace and tranquillity along the border under actual line of control.<sup>31</sup> The delegations were headed by Chinese Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Xu Dunxin and the Indian Foreign Secretary Muchkund Dubey.<sup>32</sup> The State Councillor and Foreign Minister, Qian Qichan described on May 16, the third round sessions of the Sino-Indian Joint Working Group on the boundary question as “good and useful meeting”.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese government reassured India, that it had no intention of upsetting the balance of power in the region. The discussions were held between External Affairs Minister, Madhav Singh Solanki and his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichan. The two dignitaries made an in-depth appraisal of regional security concerns. The talks reflected frankness and were, “candid and friendly”.<sup>34</sup>

Later in September, 1991 the Defence Minister, Sharad Powar stated in the Parliament that, “there was no tension on our borders with China. In the recent year, China had not taken any such step, which can create anxiety or doubt in our minds. Therefore, we would try to develop good relations with China also to ensure mutual development. As far as China is concerned, there

was certainly peace on the border and efforts are being made to improve our relations with China.<sup>35</sup>

This was generally stated regarding the Sino-Indian talks of 1991 that bilateral talks became possible at all because the two sides put the border dispute on hold. Instead of saying that the border issue has been put on hold, it is perhaps more justifiable to say that the two countries have realised that the issue is no longer crucial for regional stability and cooperation. Borders once again constructed the relation, but this time by their absence as a problem.<sup>36</sup>

The international political landscape was fast changing and India as well as China were left with no option but to adjust accordingly. With the disintegration of USSR as a nodal power centre, India lost a reliable friend in international political arena.<sup>37</sup>

### **Li Peng's Visit:**

Chinese Premier, Li Peng paid an official visit to India from December 11-16, 1991 and it was the first visit to India by a Chinese Prime Minister in 31 years.<sup>38</sup> It was in return for the one undertaken by the Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China in December 1988. The Chinese were anxious to see that the thaw reached in the relations of the two countries during Rajiv's visit should remain apparent. During the first round of talks, mostly international and regional issues were discussed and they were marked by convergence of views on the need to meet the challenges of the post-cold war era.<sup>39</sup> India used this opportunity to convey to China its concern at 'external inputs' to Pakistan's nuclear weapons capacity and missile technology. The Chinese side expressed concern about the continued activities in India by some Tibetans against their motherland and reiterated that Tibet was an inalienable part of Chinese territory. The Indian side again categorically stated its long-standing and consistent position that Tibet was an autonomous region of China and that it did not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India.<sup>40</sup>

The problems of Kashmir and Tibet were common points of concern for India and China though the nature of their genesis was quite different.<sup>41</sup>

The two countries had another source of trouble – Muslim fundamentalism. The border issue came in for detailed discussions in the second round of talks. The two sides decided upon periodic meetings between military personnel in the border areas on a regular basis to ensure peace.<sup>42</sup> Narasimha Rao talked for a fair and reasonable solution which was in consonance with the dignity and respect of each country and felt it was possible through peaceful means. He favoured a positive and practical approach, taking into account historical data, tradition, custom and present realities. On the whole the solution must be within the framework of national interests and sentiments of both sides.

Li Peng spoke quite differently though apparently quite reasonably. He talked of a ‘reasonable’ solution which could easily be found through amicable consultations conducted in a spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation was China’s standard formulation, which by implication meant that China in a spirit of give and take would extend some territorial concessions in the east provided India did the same in the west. It was different from India’s plea for mutual adjustment under which the border could be merely straightened. Li amplified mutual understanding thus; the border issue was a legacy of the past and each side, on the one hand, respect history and on the other, status quo, reality. By mutual accommodation he meant necessary compromise.

In brief, what Li meant was maintenance of status quo implying that whatever territory China had occupied in 1962 war, which was about 8500 sq miles in Ladakh region, would continue to remain in its claim on those parts of India territory to which it laid claim but which were totally under Indian administration. This was a queer logic. Instead of being generous in abandoning fictitious claim, China wanted to retain all the war gains in its possession. How could it be called ‘fair’ or ‘reasonable’?

However the two sides were no closer to a solution of the substantive problem. But there was a slight advance in that as a result of the long talks a new sense of urgency for the settlement of the dispute was perceptible and a resolve to maintain peace along the border was equally evident. The Indian side

tried to convince their Chinese guests that the talks on border problem should be so expedited that the solution of the issue may not remain an ‘uncertain possibility’; more indulging in long drawn talks would be an exercise in procrastination. However, in the joint statement issued on December 16 the two sides stressed that they would continue to work towards a mutually acceptable solution to the boundary question through meetings of Joint Working Group. Thus for all practical purposes there was no progress made on the border issue with China.<sup>43</sup>

However, to make the meeting a little meaningful, the two governments signed three agreements, i.e., resumption of border trade, reopening of consulates in Bombay and Shanghai, and cooperation in peaceful applications of other space sciences and technology.<sup>44</sup> These documents were meant to increase contacts in different spheres which would develop further cooperation between the two countries.<sup>45</sup> The two Premier agreed to give political directions to the Joint Working Group in order to facilitate in resolving the border issue.<sup>46</sup> It was also agreed to hold a cultural festival of India in China and a cultural festival of China in India. The two sides believed that dialogue and exchange of visits between the leaders of the two countries were of major importance to greater mutual understanding and further development of bilateral friendship and cooperation in all fields.

Both sides believed that the talks held so far by the Sino-Indian Joint Working Group on the boundary question had enhanced mutual understanding and agreed that the group should step up its work in search of an earliest possible solution to the boundary question. It was decided that the next meeting of the Joint Working Group would be held in New Delhi in early 1992 on a mutually convenient date. An important outcome of Li’s visit was that both the leaders gave formal shape to the mechanism for maintaining peace and tranquillity in the area along the line of actual control pending a final settlement of the boundary question. They also agreed that the periodic meetings between the military personnel in the border areas should be held on a regular basis.<sup>47</sup>

On December 20, 1991, Prime Minister Narasimha Rao gave a long statement in Lok Sabha, on the visit of Prime Minister of People's Republic of China and stated: "that the visit gained added significance because it had taken place in the context of the ongoing rapid changes in international relations involving a fundamental transformation".<sup>48</sup> It was clear that both sides had taken positive steps to move forward, toward the solution of the Sino-Indian boundary dispute. India had suggested a step-by-step approach to resolve the boundary question. The first step was the stabilization of the situation on the Line of Actual Control and to delineate it more precisely in those sectors where differences of opinion existed between India and China. The second step was to come to a mutual agreement to maintain peace and tranquillity on the Line of Actual Control. The third step was to put in place expanding mutual confidence-building measures which would create an atmosphere of normalcy and peace on the Line of Actual Control, after which both sides could proceed to address the substance of the Sino-Indian boundary question. This approach was mutually agreed upon.<sup>49</sup>

As far as solving vexed border question was concerned, India and China were seriously engaged in confidence building measures. Undoubtedly the border problem was the key to full normalization of relationship between India and China. Indeed, it was due to matured handling of this issue by leaders of both sides that things were not allowed to deteriorate and process of rapprochement continued. Admittedly, the process was a slow one, with its phases of ups and downs, but it is important to note that important differences on border issue had not been allowed to cast their shadow on overall progress negotiated settlement. Considering the sensitivity and complexity of the problem, both sides were following a cautious and step-by-step approach to amicably resolve the border dispute.

#### **Fourth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The fourth meeting of JWG was held in New Delhi from February 20-21, 1992 during which India and China agreed to establish regular and closer contacts between military personnel of both sides as parts of their bid to build

mutual confidence and help in maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). A joint statement was issued at the end of two days meetings of JWG, which declared the discussions as “frank, positive and friendly”. The talks undoubtedly set the ground for a “quantitative jump in interaction”.<sup>50</sup>

For the first time, a meeting of JWG was attended by a representative of the Defence Ministry and military officer of the rank of Brigadier from both sides to accelerate the pace of peace on the border. Both sides agreed to hold flag meetings between border personnel at Bumla in the eastern sector and at the Spanaggur Gap area in the western sector in June and October every year.<sup>51</sup> The officials proposed direct telephone links between local commanders. Besides, the two sides would hold meetings and establish contacts whenever required at the designated points in the two sectors. The two sides also exchanged views on Confidence Building Measures in the areas along the Line of Actual Control, including prior intimation of military exercise, which would “reflect the state of improved relations between the two countries”. They also exchanged views on further developing bilateral relations and on international issues of mutual concern.<sup>52</sup> There was greater emphasis on frequent meetings to develop mutual understanding so as to clear the misgivings.

An important manifestation of intensified political interactions was the visit of the Indian President R. Venkataraman to China in May 1992. In his talks with the top leadership of China both nations expressed satisfaction at the working of the Joint Working Group, agreed to deepen economic cooperation and reiterated faith in the famous principles of peaceful coexistence. During the visit “emphasis was also laid on taking concrete steps to promote mutual Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)”.<sup>53</sup> It was yet another step towards normalisation between the two sides. The visit was symbolic and no agreements were signed between the two countries. Nevertheless, both sides exchanged views on the boundary question and progress being made in other areas.<sup>54</sup> Yet it was during the first Indian President’s visit that China ‘conducted nuclear test which generated Indian apprehension in some ways.

Later on the year 1992 also witnessed direct contact between the defence establishments of both sides, which heralded a new phase of confidence building measure. The Indian initiative of sending its Defence Minister Shree P. V. Narayana Murthy to Beijing in July 1992 was a milestone in 'security building measures' between the two neighbours. The historic visit of Indian Defence Minister to China and subsequent talks with his Chinese counterpart alongwith other senior officials of the people's Liberation Army "laid the basis for greater stability and predictability, as far as the military situation along the frontier of the two countries is concerned".<sup>55</sup> In course of talks, the Chinese hosts made "special efforts to impress upon P. V. Narayana Murthy the purely coincident nature and timing of its nuclear tests".<sup>56</sup>

In economic sphere, two protocols were signed between India and China in the year 1992. The first dealt with Custom Regulation, Banking Arrangements and related matters for Border Trade. The year also saw signing of Memorandum of understanding on cooperation in Agriculture between the Ministry of Agriculture of ROI and the Ministry of Agriculture of PRC.<sup>57</sup> These steps were in the right direction and contributed in consolidation of bilateral relations. Overall, these concrete actions were helpful in strengthening of friendly bond between both nations. Since India & China were parts of developing nation states, they were learning from each other in terms of experiences. Collectively it was a positive development in this direction.

#### **Fifth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The fifth meeting took place in Beijing from October 27 to 29, 1992. During the meeting there was frank exchange of views on the border and both sides stated each other's positions.<sup>58</sup> No substantial progress was made. Both sides decided in principle to explore the possibility of moving backwards some border posts close to each other and to establish high-level defence contacts in order to maintain peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control.<sup>59</sup> They also agreed to work sincerely to further the process of finding a mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary dispute and decided to open more border points to facilitate border trade. Undoubtedly, the meeting paved way for peace

and tranquillity on the border and mutual good will and understanding. The two countries resumed the border trade in July during the year after a gap of thirty years. However, only one trade point was officially opened. For the first time the JWG met twice in the same year.<sup>60</sup>

### **Sixth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The sixth meeting of the JWG was held in New Delhi from June 25 to 30, 1993 and discussions focused on mutual transparency on the location of military positions, prevention of air intrusion and redeployment of forces along the line of Actual Control. Furthermore, both sides also agreed to open one more border trade point at the Shipkila pass between Namgya in Inida's Himachal Pradesh and Jiuha in Tibet, in addition to the existing one at the Lipulekh pass opened in July 1992.<sup>61</sup>

The meeting proved a prelude to the forthcoming visit of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to China. The 1993 agreement on the maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control could be regarded as a brainchild of the JWG border talks. During Rao's China visit yet another group that would include diplomats and defence personnel of both the countries was established under the JWG and was required to contribute to the CBMs.<sup>62</sup>

### **Narasimha Rao's China Visit:**

Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao paid a four-day visit to China from September 6-9, 1993 at the invitation of Chinese Premier, Li Peng. The visit of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to China in September 1993 was a major step forward in consolidating the process of negotiated settlement of Sino-Indian boundary dispute. The purpose of his visit was to further promote Sino-Indian good neighbourly and friendly relations, and strengthen friendly exchange in other areas. Rao held two rounds of talks with his counterpart, and met the Chinese President and the CCP General Secretary, Jiang Zemin, Chairman of the NPC, Qiao Shi, Chairman of the NPPCC, and the CCP Politburo member Hu Jintao. Both sides reaffirmed their desire to solve the border issue through friendly consultation.<sup>63</sup>

On September 7, at conclusion of the talks, both premiers signed four agreements as follows:

1. Agreement on maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the line of actual control in the Sino-Indian Border Areas;
2. Agreement between the India's Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and Chinese Ministry of Broadcasting, Film and Television;
3. Agreement on environmental cooperation between the Government of India and the Government of China; and
4. Agreement, concerning broadening border trade in Shipki La.<sup>64</sup>

The agreement of 1993 was in accordance with the five principles of mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefits and peaceful coexistence.<sup>65</sup>

The most noteworthy feature of the summit meeting between the premiers of both the sides was the conclusion of the "Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control in the Sino-Indian border area", which comprises of nine articles. Article 1 declared that "the two sides are of the view that the Sino-Indian boundary questions shall be resolved through peaceful and friendly consultations." It further stated that "pending an ultimate solution of boundary question, the two sides shall strictly respect and observe the LAC". It also provided for "where necessary, the two sides shall jointly check and determine the segments of the LAC where they have different views as to its alignment."

Article 2 stated that, "each side will keep its military forces in the areas along the line of actual control to a minimum level compatible with the friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries." Regarding reduction of military personnel and principle of security it further declared that "the two side agree to reduce their military forces along the line of actual control in conformity with the requirements of the principle of mutual and equal security to ceilings to be mutually agreed."

Article 3 provided that “both sides shall work out through consultations effective Confidence Building Measures in the areas along the line of actual control, neither side will undertake specified levels of military exercises in mutually identified zones. Each side shall give the other prior notification of military exercise of specified levels near the LAC.....”

Article 4 stated that in case of contingencies or other problems arising in the areas along the Line of Actual Control. The two sides shall deal with them through meetings and friendly consultations between the border defence personnel of the two countries to sort out problems.

Article 5 declared prevention of air intrusions and restrictions on air exercises in areas to be mutually agreed near the line of actual control.

Article 6 of the agreement clearly pointed out that reference to the line of actual control do not prejudice the respective positions of India and China on the boundary questions. Nevertheless, it may be pointed out that the reference to the line of actual control was being used for the first time in a formal document signed by both the sides.

Article 7 stated that the two sides shall agree through consultations on the form, method, scale and content of effective verifications measures and supervision required for the reduction of military forces and maintenance of peace and tranquillity in the areas along the Line of Actual Control under this agreement.

Article 8 provided for the establishment of the Expert Group consisting of diplomatic and military experts to help the JWG and settlement of differences.<sup>66</sup>

In short, the important features of 1993 Agreement were: troop reduction, conflict avoidance as well as notification measures and composition of the Expert Group. The agreement was first concrete achievement of the JWG. In some circles the agreement on the LAC was considered as the, “first

step towards a final settlement” of the border dispute between both Asian giants.<sup>67</sup>

In the words of two seasoned Indian diplomats who specialize on China, the agreement “binds the two sides to a peaceful resolution of the boundary question through friendly consultation. It states that neither side shall use or threaten to use force against the other by a means..... The agreement also provides for retaining military forces along the Line of Actual Control to a minimum level compatible with friendly and good neighbourly relations between the two countries”.<sup>68</sup> The 1993 agreement was undoubtedly significant development in the annals of bilateral relations between the two Asian giants. In the backdrop of Post Cold War world, it stabilized relations on the one hand and initiated numerous confidence building measures, on the other hand. The agreement in some ways was manifestations of China’s good neighbourly policy and India’s pursuance of pragmatic policy towards China.

The positive outcome of historic Agreement of 1993 was logical culmination of the new chapter of diplomatic negotiations that began in 1981, and further carried forward by the summits at highest political level since 1988. All this shows that the Sino-Indian relations had reached a stage of maturity, which meant that the two countries would not allow their differences to hinder the development of their ties based on mutual benefit.<sup>69</sup>

To further these goals a Chinese naval training frigate Zheng in November 1993, came on a goodwill visit to Bombay.<sup>70</sup> The warship sailed 4, 800 nautical miles from Shanghai to Mumbai, besides making port visits to Bangkok and Karachi. The process of Sino-Indian ties, now acquired a naval dimension.<sup>71</sup> Later in November 1993, Chairman of CPPCC (Chinese People’s Political Cosoltative Conference) Li Ruihuan visited India as part of ongoing exchange of high level political interactions and emphasized on good relations between two nations.<sup>72</sup>

Thereafter in December 1993, the Chinese Vice Chief of General Staff, Lt General Xu Hui Zi, along with a high-powered army team had a meeting

with Lt General Surinder Wath, and his Indian counterparts, Air Chief Marshal SK Kaul and Admiral Shekawat. This is significant move to further military diplomacy considering the two countries can express hostility through the military medium towards each other. As a result, this strengthens the CBMs initiated at the political level between the two sides.<sup>73</sup>

### **Expert Group:**

The year 1994 witnessed the continuation of high level political and military exchanges. The two neighbours instituted an Expert Group that also, included cartographers and surveyors, to demarcate the LAC and discuss troop reduction.<sup>74</sup> The Sino-Indian Expert Group had been set up to assist the JWG in implementation of the Agreement on Maintenance of peace and tranquillity along the LAC in the India-China border areas.

*The first meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in New Delhi from February 3-6, 1994. The Indian delegation was led by Mr. Shiv Shankar Menon, Joint Secretary in the External Affairs Ministry, including representatives from the Ministry of External Affairs, Defence, Home Affairs, the Army Headquarters and the Surveyors of India. The twelve member Chinese delegation was led by Mr. Fu Xuezhong, Deputy Director in the Foreign Ministry's Asia Department and includes military experts.<sup>75</sup> The meeting discussed 'the scope of functions and powers, future tasks and modalities' to be followed.<sup>76</sup> Both sides adopted a 'constructive and forward looking approach'. The subjects broadly discussed were clarification of LAC between India and China, reduction of military forces along the line, other confidence building measures, such as prior notification of military exercise and prevention of air intrusions and verification methods. Sector wise approach had been adopted. Ground realities were taken into account while discussing the places where some differences exist.<sup>77</sup>

*The second meeting of Sino Indian Expert Group* was held at Beijing on April 21 to 23rd, 1994 and both sides agreed on the work regulation.<sup>78</sup> In some concrete manner both sides concurred that the mandate of the group meeting is

to include assisting the JWG in clarification of the LAC, redeployment of military forces along the LAC verification mechanisms and so on.<sup>79</sup>

### **Seventh Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The seventh round of JWG meeting was held at Beijing from July 6-7, 1994, in which the Peace and Tranquillity Agreement of September 1993 got ratified. In addition periodical meetings of local levels between border officials was also discussed.<sup>80</sup> The Indian delegation was led by Foreign Secretary K. Srinivasan, and the Chinese side by its Vice-Foreign Minister Jang Jiakuan. Srinivasan called on the Chinese Vice Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs Qian Qichen.

India and China expressed satisfaction at the prevailing peace situation along the line of actual control. The two countries agreed to open trade via the Shipkila route on the Himachal Pradesh-Tibet border later in July. It was also decided that the two nations would carry out a joint study on enhancing the existing facilities for pilgrims to Kailash and Mansarovar and the opening of additional routes for them.<sup>81</sup>

In July, the Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen visited New Delhi and expressed satisfaction at the growing ties between both the nations.<sup>82</sup> General B.C. Joshi became the first Chief of Army Staff to visit China and met with his Chinese counterpart and other senior PLA officers in July.<sup>83</sup> It was felt by both sides that exchanges at the level of services chiefs will increase the knowledge and awareness of each others capabilities and intention. Chinese Defence Minister, Chi Haotian led a defence delegation to India in September 1994, and discussed the modalities of implementing the agreement concerning maintenance of peace and tranquillity in border areas along the LAC with Indian defence personnel. The talks were said to be “constructive” and held in a frank and candid manner.<sup>84</sup>

Later in October India's Vice-President and old China hand Shri K. R. Narayanan visited China and reviewed bilateral ties with top Chinese leadership. The year also marked fortieth anniversary of enunciation of

principles of peaceful coexistence “Panchsheel”, which was celebrated by both nations. Both sides emphasised the principles as the basic tenet of their foreign policies.<sup>85</sup> Sino-Indian relations witnessed an exchange of visits throughout the year, which added to the momentum of the normalisation process.

*The Third meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in New Delhi from March 2-4, 1995, the two sides agreed to establish two additional designated points for meetings between military personnel at Nathu La in the Sikkim-Tibet sector and another point to be agreed in the middle sector.<sup>86</sup>

### **Eight Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The eight meeting of JWG was held at New Delhi from August 18-20, 1995. It was during this round of talks that the Sumdorong Chu crisis of 1986-87 was settled when both sides agreed disengage the four controversial posts in the area. The Sino-Indian forces in these posts were dangerously close; any misunderstanding could have triggered off a conflict. Both sides agreed to retain one post so as to facilitate dialogue on disengagement of troops along the entire line. It was also agreed to set up a meeting point at Nathu La in Sikkim state of India and Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) border. Another development was the recognition of “pockets of dispute” by both sides. These were Trig Heights and Demchok in Western Sector, Barahoti in Middle Sector, and Namka Chu, Sumdorong Chu, Chantze Aspahila and Longju in the Eastern Sector.<sup>87</sup> The meeting was originally scheduled for two days, but it was extended by a day to complete the task.

The issue of transfer of Chinese M-11 missiles to Pakistan was also raised at the meeting but the Chinese response was a ‘familiar’ one. They said that, “the transfer conforms to the guidelines of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)” although China is not a signatory to it. The Chinese official also clarified that the quantum of arms supplied to Pakistan was too small and “will not disturb the regional balance”.<sup>88</sup> Apart from the land based troops, their air force too developed close interactions, officers of People’s Army-Air Force (PLAAF) have visited India’s Air Force bases in 1995.<sup>89</sup> There was also

an emphasis on reduction and withdrawal of troops from military posts to ensure peace and tranquillity. MTCR and M-11 were also discussed from the security angle of both the countries.

The year 1996 marked another step forward towards CBMs, which would in the long term pave the way for resolution of the vexed border problem. *The fourth round of Sino-Indian Expert Group* meeting was held in Beijing from February 7-9, 1996. Both sides discussed concrete measures to implement the 1993 CBMs Agreement.<sup>90</sup>

#### **Ninth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The ninth round of JWG meeting held from October 16-18, 1996 in Beijing; both sides agreed to increase reciprocal visits by military officials with the rank of major general. Moreover, the agreed to establish two additional meeting places along the eastern sector (Bumal Dichu), and one in a mountain pass along the middle sector (Lipulekh near Pithrogarh) for border personnel regular flag meetings to be held twice a year.<sup>91</sup>

#### **Jiang Zemin's India Visit:**

The Chinese President Jiang Zemin come to India on November 28, 1996, along with high level delegation led by the Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister, Minister for Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation, Minister for Civil Affairs and the Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region's Government. Jiang Zemin was the first de facto and de jure head of the Chinese government to visit India. During his four day visit, Jiang held cordial talks with President S.D. Sharma, Vice President K.R. Narayanan, Prime Minister Devguda, External Affairs Minister I.K Gujral and other officials., Both sides discussed bilateral issues and reached common understanding on many international issue.<sup>92</sup> Jiang said that though India and China still have "some outstanding problems left over from history but I can say for sure that our common interests far out weight our differences as neither of us poses a threat to the other".<sup>93</sup> President Jiang urged both sides to solve the boundary issue in a peaceful manner and said that India should approach the problem "in a

forgiving and understanding manner so as to arrive at fair and reasonable solution”.<sup>94</sup>

During Jiang visit, another important step similar to 1993 Agreement was taken and both nations signed four important agreements-

- 1) The agreement on Confidence building measures (BMs) in Military Field along the Line of Actual Control in India-China border Areas;
- 2) The agreement concerning the maintenance of the Consulate General of India in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) of the People’s Republic of China;
- 3) The agreement on cooperation for combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substance and other crimes; and
- 4) The agreement on maritime transport. Among all these, the agreement on CBMs was of foremost importance, and was signed by I.K. Gujral and Qian Qichen both Foreign Ministers of respective nations on November 29, 1996.

The agreement pronounced that the suggested measures aim at “a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement” of the vexed boundary question.<sup>95</sup> The 1996 Agreement called for building a “long-term good neighbourly relationship” and “effective” CBMs by mutual reduction of forces on both sides.<sup>96</sup> About the agreement, Jiang said that it was a major step towards building mutual trust and setting the atmosphere for resolving the border problem.<sup>97</sup> The 1996 Agreement comprised of twelve articles. The preamble to the agreement mentions the five principles of peaceful coexistence and notes that “it serves the fundamental interests of the peoples of India and China to foster a long-term good neighbourly relations”.<sup>98</sup>

The very first Article of the agreement is very significant, which says, “Neither side shall use its military capability against the other side”. Article II stated that “the two sides reiterate their determination to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement of the boundary question”. Article III went into specific details about reduction of military forces “within mutually agreed geographical Zones” along the LAC, the exchange of data on reduction of forces and categories of armaments, and decisions on ceilings on military

forces and armaments to be kept by each side within these zones. The ceiling would be inconsonance with the principle of “mutual and equal security”. Article IV to VIII dealt with various CBMs designed to stabilize the border areas and exchange of information etc. Article IX provided for “in case a doubtful situation develops... either side has the right to seek a clarification from the other side”.

The declaration of Article X was important. It recognised the need for the two sides to arrive at a common understanding of the alignment of the LAC, and to speed up the process of clarification and confirmation of the line. Initially, the exercise would be to clarify the alignment in those segments where both sides have different perceptions. There is also a stipulation for the exchange of maps indicating respective perceptions of the entire alignment of the LAC as soon as possible”. Article XI was equally important and stated that detailed implement measures required under Article I and Article X of this Agreement, shall be decided through mutual consultations in the Sino-Indian Joint Working Group on the boundary question. The Sino-Indian Diplomatic and Military Expert Group shall assist the JWG in devising implementation measures under the Agreements. According to Article XII, this agreement is subject to ratification and shall enter into force on the date of exchange of instruments of ratification.

The Agreement of 1996 was based on the foundation of Agreement of 1993 was undoubtedly as significant development in the bilateral Sino-Indian relations. The Chinese President, Jiang Zemin termed the agreement as a factor that would further enhance peace and security and eventually create a sound climate for the resolution of the boundary question.<sup>99</sup> Over all, Jiang’s visit was significant in political and economic level as both sides reiterated desire to further continue the process of rapprochement. Apart from ongoing efforts to resolve the border dispute, both nations emphasised on strengthening economic and trade relations and enhanced cooperation in Science and technology and other areas.<sup>100</sup> The two sides also agreed to work towards a constructive and cooperative relationship oriented towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>101</sup> The momentum of

the exchange of high level visits by two countries enhanced mutual understanding and confidence.

Sino-Indian relations in January 1997 commenced with the visit of an Indian Parliamentary Affairs delegation headed by Minister of State for Law and Justice Ramakant D Khalap to China. Chinese political leader Wang Bingqian, Vice Chairman of the Standing Committee met the delegation in Beijing. The Chinese Foreign Minister spokesman expressed hope that the 1996 agreement would fructify into a final solution over the border dispute under the premiership of I.K. Gujral. The Indian Vice-Chief of Army Staff Lt General V.P. Malik met with Chinese Defence Minister Chi Haotian in Beijing. The visit marked another step in the process of creating normalcy on the Sino-Indian border that began in 1993 with Rao's China visit. Apart from these visits, the two sides attempted to develop their bilateral trade ties with each other.<sup>102</sup>

The year 1997 saw the continuation of meetings. The *fifth round of Sino-Indian Expert Group meeting* was held in New Delhi from March 3-5, 1997. Both sides discussed establishing an additional meeting site in the eastern sector and also rearrangement of meeting times.<sup>103</sup> China wants to develop friendly relations with India as it is essential for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and in the world.<sup>104</sup>

### **Tenth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The tenth round of JWG meeting was held in New Delhi, from August 4-5, 1997. Agreements signed during the visit of Jiang Zemin in November 1996 were ratified. The two sides focused on implementing the 1993 and 1996 CBM agreements and pledged to continue dialogue on a mutually acceptable border.<sup>105</sup> There was no substantive progress during the meetings. The JWG thus proved quite effective in building confidence measure along the LAC and restoring lost trust between the India and Chinese people. The border areas are said to be comparatively peaceful since the initiation of various rounds of talks by the JWG.<sup>106</sup>

According to an Indian analyst the main obstacle was that both sides were still unable to narrow their differences on troop reductions along the border. Further because of domestic compulsions, the Government of ROI faced constraints in moving ahead without much Chinese support on the issue of border dispute. Recognizing this fact both sides pursued step-by-step approach. Nonetheless, the positive factor of peaceful border was recognized by both nations. In the words of a Chinese Analyst, “with the signing of the LAC agreement, the legalistic and historical framework of the border claims has been thrown on the remotest back burner, or even behind the burner shelf. There is widespread support to the LAC agreement in both India and China, which will further strengthen the determination of Indian and Chinese leaders to boost the momentum for exploring a final solution”. The Agreements were seen as steps based on “rational politics and objectives realities” in the course of the comprehensive border settlement.

Later in October 1997, Gen. VP Malik the Vice Chief of the Army Staff visited Beijing. Both sides in some ways concurred that these visits would give an impetus to the ongoing military confidence building and would result in the establishment of a regular communication channel between the two armed forces. The net affect of regular political interactions and military exchanges were positive. Indeed till the year 1997 the bilateral relations registered upward momentum. Overall the pace of Sino-Indian negotiations witnessed certain dynamism and indeed brought about stable ties between these two important rising powers. But on the other hand some circles in India were not totally satisfied with the overall pace of negotiations to resolve border issue with China. However, in India there was “a palpable under lying reality, namely that it was not relationship between equals”.<sup>107</sup>

China by mid nineties had grown both in economic and military terms into a fast rising regional power with aspirations towards global power as such being its neighbour India right fully head anxiety about behaviour and intention of substantive rise of China as well its implications for India’s security.

As two noted diplomats wrote that “it is a fact however, that progress in their implementation has been rather slow”.<sup>108</sup> Still India pursued the policy of continuation of talks and serious engagement. At the same time being a rising power itself India in its rightful search for power was also looking for building leverages with China. India perceived that leverages would enhance its position including acceleration of pace of negotiations to resolve border issue as well as better understanding of its security concerns by China. Therefore, India continued to pursue two pronged policy viz., engagement and building leverages with China.<sup>109</sup> This shows that India acted as a matured nation in the interest of peace and stability.

The first important bilateral contact of the year 1998 was in April when the Chief of General Staff of PLA, General Fu Quanyou visited India as part of exchange of high level military visits. It was for the first time that the Chief of PLA was in India as such it was important development.<sup>110</sup> General Fu told media persons that it was important for both sides to carry out gradual and early demarcation of the Line of Actual Control. In talks with the PLA Chief, the ministry of defence, GOI raised the contentious issues of Sino-Pak missile and nuclear collaborations, wrong projection of the Chinese maps and the border disputes along with the issue of the LAC.<sup>111</sup> More specifically, India’s Defence Minister George Fernandes in talks with the PLA Chief of staff made clear India’s concern and objections to China’s transfer of missile and missile technology to Pakistan. To this General Fu emphasised the Chinese viewpoint that the relations among nations be based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence as agreed by both the sides. Finally, Prime Minister Vajpayee cleared India’s position by stating that improvements in Sino-Indian relations “should be based on the recognition and respect for each other’s concerns”.<sup>112</sup> At the end of the talks India and China committed themselves to peaceful resolution of bilateral disputes.<sup>113</sup>

Later, the Defence Minister George Fernandes called China a “bigger potential threat” than Pakistan. He stated that a massive electronic surveillance establishment by Beijing in CoCo Islands near Andaman and Nicobar Islands

was monitoring everything in India. He further stated that there were moves by China to convert the surveillance set up into a major naval base which could be a direct threat to us.<sup>114</sup> Fernandes reiterated that “China has provided Pakistan with both missile as well as nuclear know-how”. He also stated that China has its nuclear weapons stockpiled in Tibet right along India’s borders, where a lot of elongation of air fields is going on to station Russia made Sukhoi. Further on the eastern frontier with Myanmar, he said that Chinese have trained and equipped the Burmese army. These factors point out that the potential threat from China was greater than that of Pakistan.<sup>115</sup>

China on its part expressed utmost regret and resentment over the statement by India’s Defence Minister and stated that it has “seriously destroyed the good atmosphere of improved relations between the two countries”. The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Zhu Bang Zao, termed Fernandes statement as absolutely ridiculous and unworthy of refutation. He described Fernandes “criticism of China’s relations with other countries” as absolutely fictitious and entirely baseless. The spokesman stated that “China does not constitute any threat to other countries” and it has no basis in fact, therefore, ‘the Chinese side has to express extreme regret and indignation over this’.<sup>116</sup> The Chinese side first signalled in a nuanced way the mild break down when its spokesman stated that Fernandes statement has “seriously destroyed”, atmosphere of improved bilateral relations. India on its part continued to reiterate its faith in the dialogue mode and later on the Ministry of External Affairs stated that New Delhi “remains committed to the process of dialogue for the development of a friendly, cooperative, good-neighbourly, mutually beneficial relationship with China, our largest neighbour”.<sup>117</sup>

It appeared in April 1998 that the normalisation of relations between India and China was going in the right direction. However, India 11 days after the Chinese Defence Minister Fu Quanyou’s departure from India, exploded its nuclear devices.<sup>118</sup> Consequently on May 11 and 13, 1998 India tested five nuclear devices, including one hydrogen bomb and the tests brought about an end to ambiguity and uncertainty about India’s nuclear posture.

### **China's response to the Indian Nuclear Test:**

The Chinese government was deeply shocked by the Indian nuclear tests and thereby expresses its strong condemnation. China voiced its concern by pointing out that the explosions ran against the international trend and were detrimental to the peace and stability of the South Asian region.<sup>119</sup> Further, the official media like People's Daily reported: Indian today conducted three underground nuclear tests in the Pokharan area of Rajasthan. Twenty-four years ago, in May 1974, India carried out its nuclear explosion at the same location. According to reports, India's major opposition parties, the Congress and the United Front, and other parties have expressed support for this nuclear tests.<sup>120</sup>

China's initial reaction to the Indian tests was somewhat measured; however, China's reaction and condemnation to India was strongest when Indian Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee's letter to the US President, Bill Clinton, appeared in the media citing "China threat" in defence of India's nuclear tests. Vajpayee had cited "deteriorating security environment" in India's vicinity is a matter of concern for India as in China, India had an "overt nuclear weapons state" on its borders which was "materially helping another neighbour" of India to become a covert nuclear weapon state. This in the words of Vajpayee created "an atmosphere of distrust" and remains so due to the unsettled border problem. The letter was leaked and appeared in the New York Times on May 13, 1998 itself.<sup>121</sup> Now, partly bitten by Indian Defence Minister, George Fernandes's China bashing and more so by Vajpayee's letter to the US President, China's reaction to the second series of nuclear explosions of May 13 was harsh. It accused that the Indian detonations reflected an "outrageous contempt for the common will of the international community", and further accused India of seeking "hegemony in South Asia". China also called on the international community that it should adopt a common position in strongly demanding India to immediately stop its nuclear development program.<sup>122</sup>

Undoubtedly Indian nuclear tests of May 1998 and subsequent strong Chinese response both caused 'major set back' in bilateral relations. China had

carried out an anti-India campaign world wide demanding New Delhi surrender its nuclear option and unconditionally sign non-proliferation treaties like the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT). This had vitiated Sino-Indian ties with many other official interactions along being either postponed or delayed. Moreover the few interactions that held were also not as friendly as they could have been.<sup>123</sup> In short there was brief breakdown in Sino-Indian negotiations in the year 1998.

Despite the negative atmosphere, India continued the policy of engagement and went ahead with *the sixth meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held at Beijing on June 8-9, 1998. The meeting of India-China expert group was eclipsed by Indian nuclear test (May 1998) therefore, no concrete progress could be made. The frequent emphasis on early solutions of boundary issue from India's side was not liked by Chinese officials. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesman expressed his reaction that the Indian government's statements against China had infringed the normal peace process between India and China. Moreover, he suggested that India should refrain from giving negative perceptual remarks against China so that the bilateral relations might be strengthened on the track of normalcy and harmony.<sup>124</sup>

India on the other hand, kept on trying to fix a date for the Joint Working Group meeting throughout the second half of the year but China did not agree.<sup>125</sup> The joint mechanisms failed to materialise in 1998 and there was break-down in the process of Sino-Indian negotiations despite India's sincere efforts to continue with it. The summer of 1998 witnessed the lowest ebb of Sino-Indian bilateral relations after a long period of time.

The Chinese ambassador, Zhou Gang in India on July 9, 1998, in an interview to *The Hindu* reiterated that China was committed to "develop constructive partnership with India oriented towards the 21<sup>st</sup> century." Zhou Gang also emphasized that India immediately stop some baseless allegations towards China and give responsible explanation to anti-China remarks made by some people. The first opportunity for rapprochement came in July 1998 in

Manila during the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Regional Forum meeting from July 25-28. After May nuclear detonations this was first major encounter of India with the world leaders.

Jaswant Singh, India's External Affairs Minister explained to the forum that nuclear tests were conducted out of India's security concerns. He refrained from citing China as a threat. During the conference Jaswant Singh also had a meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Mr. Tang Jiaxuan. This was the highest-level contact both countries had made since the May 1998 nuclear explosions.<sup>126</sup>

In fact throughout the year India showed its willingness to continue the policy of engagement with China and attended meetings of various bilateral mechanisms. Despite refusal from Chinese side, India made 'consistent overtures' and 'conciliatory statements' to assuage perceived Chinese ruffled feeling in a bid to reduce bilateral tensions. The Prime Minister Vajpayee in a concrete statement to Parliament in September 1998, emphasised 'the fundamental Indian desire to have friendly relations with China' and 'a satisfactory solution to the border dispute through negotiation.'<sup>127</sup> Another step taken in September was to instruct diplomats to 'avoid any mentions of China in their dealings with the other four permanent powers.'<sup>128</sup> Furthermore, the statement in October 1998 by the Chief of the Indo-Tibetan Border police that the Chinese were amassing troops along the LAC was also 'termed as inaccurate' by the government of India.<sup>129</sup> Carrying this further forward, in October, Brajesh Mishra, Principal Secretary to Prime Minister stated that India did not see China as "an enemy" and that it would like to solve all problems through substantive dialogue.<sup>130</sup> Finally in December 1998 when Jaswant Singh was appointed as India's new Foreign Minister, the Chinese counterpart, Tang Jiaxuan sent a congratulatory message to him. Jaswant Singh stated that China should help India "untie the knot" through frequent consultation.<sup>131</sup> Thus at least by the year end both sides showed willingness in some ways to restart engagement policy. India's diplomatic relations with China remained estranged

for 9 months. By February 1999, both appeared to be trying to reconcile their differences.<sup>132</sup>

### **Eleventh Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The eleventh Joint Working Group meeting held on April 26 and 27, 1999 formed the first institutional contact between the two countries after India's nuclear tests in May 1998, which disturbed the rotational cycle of the meetings.<sup>133</sup> This marks a u-turn in Sino-Indian ties. The meeting was chaired by the Indian Foreign Secretary, K. Raghunath and Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister, Yang Wenchang. Both sides argued that the Panchsheel (five principles of peaceful coexistence) policy should form the basis for strengthening relations between the two countries.<sup>134</sup> It discussed the ways and means of developing "friendly, good neighbourly relations" and expanding understanding on issues of mutual concern.<sup>135</sup> As this was the first meeting of the JWG after Pokharan II tests, India assured the Chinese side that it did not regard China as a security threat. In the meeting both sides decided to further expand ties in other fields and opined that there was considerable scope for developing bilateral relations in economic, commercial and other fields.<sup>136</sup> Further both, sides agreed that India and China have to play an important role in "shaping the emerging new world order".<sup>137</sup> Thus this round of talks was confined to improve the general tenor of relations rather than discuss the border issue. There was no progress in delineating the LAC at this meeting but Sino-Pak nexus in the nuclear field came up for discussion.<sup>138</sup> Interestingly, on the eve of the meeting, the former Chinese Ambassador, Chan Ruisheng, suggested that China should recognise Sikkim as an integral part of India if the latter opens up trade routes in the Indo-Tibetan regions.<sup>139</sup> During External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's visit to Beijing in June 1999, it was decided that both sides would make clarifications on the LAC along the border in the subsequent JWG meetings.<sup>140</sup> The visit marked the resumption of high-level dialogue. Both sides stated that they were not a threat to each other. Both sides agreed on a need for a bilateral security dialogue.<sup>141</sup> Under the joint effort of

both governments, the current Sino-Indian relations began to move out of the shadows and return to a healthy orbit.<sup>142</sup>

Later in November 1999 *the seventh meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in New Delhi. In the meeting both sides reiterated their commitment to maintain peace and tranquillity as envisaged by the agreements of 1993 and 1996.<sup>143</sup> Though no concrete progress was registered still the fact that China considered the meeting as forward movement was notable and signified the continuity of efforts to resolve the issue.<sup>144</sup>

The momentum of visits continued as India and China moved ahead in different areas of bilateral relationship such as trade, cultural exchanges, military exchanges, security dialogues, science and technology cooperation etc.<sup>145</sup> The year 2000 was an important year for India and China, for it was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between these two countries.<sup>146</sup> Commerce and industry Minister, Murosoli Maran visited China for the meeting of the Sino-Indian Joint Economic Group on economic relations and trade, science and technology in Beijing on February 21-22; 2000. During this visit, the two sides signed an agreement on issues relating to WTO and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for setting up a Joint Working Group in the field of steel. Both sides agreed to facilitate the exchange of visits between the business communities; establishment of business representative offices in each other's territory; organisation of exhibitions and trade fairs, encouraging greater participation in them, etc. They also agreed on the need to improve bilateral direct banking, shipping and air services.<sup>147</sup>

The first round of the Security Dialogue was held in Beijing on March 6-7, 2000.<sup>148</sup> During the first round, India sought Chinese understanding for its nuclear weapons programmes. But China on the contrary, asked India to renounce its nuclear weapons programme and abide by the UN Security Council Resolution 1172. India rejected Chinese plea for implementation of Security Council Resolution and reiterated that every nation has a right to determine its own security requirements. More importantly, India took up the

issue of Chinese assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile programme. The Indian officials conveyed to their Chinese counterpart that this had an adverse impact on regional stability to which we have been obliged to respond in a 'responsible and restrained' manner.<sup>149</sup> As was the usual practice, China replied that its relations with Pakistan were normal relations between two states and were not directed against India.<sup>150</sup> Thus, the first meeting in which security specific issues were raised was a notable development in Sino-Indian relations. Viewed in the long-term of bilateral relations, to expect concrete result in one or two meetings was unrealistic as well. As such, this development of security dialogue symbolised the continuation of Sino-Indian rapprochement. On April 1, 2000, India and China jointly commemorated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Heads of State and Government and Foreign Ministers of the two countries exchanged congratulatory messages, and embassies in both countries held commemorative receptions.

### **Twelfth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The twelfth meeting of the JWG on border talks was held in New Delhi, on April 28 and 29, 2000. The Indian side was led by Foreign Secretary Lalit Man Singh and Chinese side by the Vice Foreign Ministers, Yang Wenchang, including the Director - General of the Asian department, Zhang Juihuan and officials from the PLA.<sup>151</sup> They discussed the border issue and the President Narayanan's upcoming visit to Beijing.<sup>152</sup> It was decided during the meeting that the Experts Group would meet "as frequently as required" to discuss about the LAC.<sup>153</sup> Adopting a "forward looking" approach, both sides agreed to exchange maps as a further step towards working on the identification of the LAC.<sup>154</sup> Thus they agreed to conduct "maps exercise", which basically meant exchange and comparison of their respective maps on the LAC and was step forward in 'identification of the line'. Accordingly, both sides chose the middle sector as the first section to determine, as it was less disputable in comparison with the other two sectors of border.<sup>155</sup> The discussion also included clarification of the LAC and CBMs between the militaries.<sup>156</sup>

After the JWG meeting, it seems that India has ‘stepped up its efforts to find an early resolution’ of the intractable border issue. In April 2000, the Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh conveyed to the members of Chinese delegation of the JWG that India strongly desires “result oriented negotiations”.<sup>157</sup> The year 2000 was an important years for India and China, for it was the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between these two countries. Another positive development was the visit of Indian President, KR Narayanan in May-June 2000 to China.<sup>158</sup>

### **K.R Narayanan’s China Visit:**

The President of India, KR Narayanan visited China from May 28 to June 3, 2000 at the invitation of President Jiang Zemin. This was the first visit by the highest level leader since the May 1998 test and reciprocated Jiang Zemin’s 1996 visit to India.<sup>159</sup> China attached great importance to Narayanan’s visit. Two weeks prior to Narayanan’s Beijing visit, China said it “consider the upcoming visit of Mr. Narayanan as a big event”. Dai Bingguo, member of the central committee of the CCP and Minister for International Department, describe Indian President as “a friend of China” and praised Narayanan’s contributions for promotion of Sino-Indian relations. The official further remarked that China admires and respects him and hopes the upcoming visit will make great contributions to the improvement and development of state-to-state relations between the two countries.<sup>160</sup>

During his visit, it repeated its position that border issue is left over by history, Narayanan correctly stated that ‘inherited problems’ needed to be resolved and must not be left over for history.<sup>161</sup> Narayanan had useful and constructive discussions with the top Chinese leadership including President, Jiang Zemin, Premier, Zhu Rongji, NPC Chairman, Li Peng and CPPCC Chairman, Li Ruihuan. The two Presidents agreed to enhance bilateral interaction, including at the highest level, and to enhance bilateral cooperation in all areas.<sup>162</sup> All the meetings were characterised by warmth and friendliness and marked by expressions of goodwill and hopes for a close, cooperative relationship. A significant agreement was signed on the establishment of an

Eminent Persons Group (EPG), which would further assist the process of bilateral understanding and amity.<sup>163</sup> During the visit, the Chinese President Jiang Zemin advanced a four-point proposal for solving bilateral issues as follows: -

1. Increase bilateral visits at various levels to enhance mutual confidence;
2. Expansion of trade and economic cooperation that would include encouraging entrepreneurs of both countries to invest in each other's country;
3. Strengthening of cooperation and coordination in world affairs; and
4. Proper handling of issue left over from the past in the spirit of seeking common ground, while reserving differences. This does not mean shelving the disputes forever, nor does it mean developing bilateral relations only after all disputes are completely resolved.<sup>164</sup> The proposal also called for strengthening "coordination and cooperation in international affairs, and make joint efforts for the establishment of a just and reasonable new international political and economic order."<sup>165</sup> Thus, the visit symbolised the continuation of beneficial political interactions at the highest political level.

As a result of India's stepped up efforts to find resolution of the border issue, China in some ways agreed to 'quicken the pace of the negotiations'. As the Indian sources pointed out, the first ever exchange of maps took place only after the Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh wrote to his Chinese counterpart and urged him to expedite the process of clarification and confirmation of the L.A.C. in the Sino-Indian border areas.<sup>166</sup> In the words of an analyst, "However, this does not imply any shift in China's management of the border problem".<sup>167</sup>

The eighth round of Sino-Indian Expert Group meeting was held on November 13 and 14, 2000 in Beijing. For the first time both sides exchanged maps on the 545 km long middle sector of the Sino-Indian border.<sup>168</sup> On the one hand, this process continued but China on the other hand also continued to emphasize the need for, "patience and right conditions" to settle the vexed Sino-Indian border issue.

In January 2001, Li Peng, Chairman of the Chinese National People's Congress (NPC) standing committee, outlined some 'basic tenets' of China's

policy towards India, which included “a political commitment at the top in Beijing to intensify the relationship, expansion of economic cooperation, enhancing mutual understanding by addressing outstanding issue such as the border dispute, and an assurance that China stood for peace and stability in the subcontinent”.<sup>169</sup> Li Peng emphasised the point that “developing good-neighbourly and friendly relations with India is our permanent guideline as well as the important content of China’s foreign policy of peripheral peace”.<sup>170</sup> The visit of Li Peng to India was a major step forward in Sino-Indian rapprochement. The visit was first by ‘a top-level Chinese visitors since the May 1998 tests, and the first since Jiang Zemin’s 1996 visit.<sup>171</sup> Li Peng stated that “in the spirit of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation, the boundary dispute can be resolved.”<sup>172</sup>

Li touched on various issues and elaborated China’s thinking on various regional and international issues. Li echoed Chinese leadership’s worry about the challenges posed by globalisation and the current reality of a unipolar world. While accepting globalisation as “an unavoidable reality in the world today”, he, added that the international community “should work hard to ensure that globalisation leads to a balanced stable and sustainable development of the world economy”. On the question of international terrorism, Li for the first time clarified China’s position and expressed China’s willingness to cooperate with India. He said, like India, China views international terrorism as a big threat to its national security. Li’s India visit was regarded as yet another step in the direction of deepening understanding and building trust between India and China.<sup>173</sup>

The second round of security dialogue was held in New Delhi on February 8, 2001. India again conveyed its concern to China over Beijing’s supply of nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan.<sup>174</sup> As was the usual Chinese reply, it again stated that Sino-Pakistan relations were not aimed against India.

The other feature of the normalisation process was that of military diplomacy wherein an Indian three star General HRS Kalkat and an army delegation met the

PLA Chief of staff General Fu Quanyou and the deputy PLA Chief Xiong Guangkai in April 2001.<sup>175</sup> They emphasized on the fact that both sides should resolve their existing problems with ‘mutual understanding, mutual concession and mutual adjustment’.<sup>176</sup> In May, the Chief of staff of Indian Air Force on its part stated that “it is primarily a goodwill visit and an opportunity to strengthen bilateral military relations”.<sup>177</sup> Further in May, two Chinese naval ships Harbin, a Luh class destroyer and Tailing, a fuqing class replenishment ship visited Mumbai in a goodwill mission.<sup>178</sup>

Another important Chinese dignitary to visit India was Li Changchun, member of the Politburo of the Chinese Communist Party and Party Secretary of Guangdong province. Li visited India at the invitation of External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, from May 12-18, 2001. He called on the President of India, Narayanan, and met External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh and Pramod Mahajan, Minister for Information Technology and Parliamentary Affairs. Li on his part said that China and India, as the two largest developing countries, had a common responsibility to promote economic development, promote the well being of the two peoples and also further strengthen bilateral ties. Li also said that the commonalities between India and China far outweighed the differences.<sup>179</sup>

Later on June 28 and 29, 2001, *the ninth meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in New Delhi. The delegations of both sides reviewed the other side’s maps and exchanged views about differences.<sup>180</sup> Dr. Najma Hapatulla, Deputy Chairperson, Rajya Sabha led a Parliamentary-cum-business-cum-trade union delegation to China from July 1-7, 2001 at the invitation of Li Peng, Chairman of the National People’s Congress. During her visit, Dr. Hapatulla called on Li Peng and Zhu Rongji, the Chinese Premier. The Chinese leaders conveyed satisfaction at the improving Sino-Indian relations and their sound development in recent time. Both sides expressed their desire to strengthen bilateral economic relations, and the need for further contacts between businessmen of two countries to enhance their understanding of each other’s economy and market.<sup>181</sup>

### **Thirteenth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The thirteenth meeting of JWG was held on July 31-August 1, 2001 at Beijing. During meeting both sides adopted a constructive and forward-looking approach. Both sides agreed that the present momentum in bilateral relations should be maintained and enhanced through further high-level exchanges. Both sides reviewed

the work being done by JEG on the clarification and confirmation of the LAC, and on the implementation of CBMs. In the JEG meetings, views are being exchanged on the maps depicting the LAC as perceived by the two sides. The Indian Foreign Secretary, and Vice Foreign Minister of China, Wang Yi, also exchanged views on the international situation. There was agreement that the improvement and further development of Sino-Indian relations will make an important contribution to peace and stability in Asia and the world. The Foreign Secretary also called on the Chinese Foreign Minister, Tang Jiaxuan and Dai Bingguo, Minister of International Department of the CCP on August 1, 2001.<sup>182</sup>

After the September 11 bombings of twin towers in New York, both India and China expressed their desire for greater cooperation. Suresh Prabhu, the Minister of Power visited China from September 17-23, 2001 and Jagmohan, the Minister of Tourism visited China from November 8-11, 2001. During his meeting with his Chinese counterpart, both sides agreed to explore the vast potentials in the tourism industry.<sup>183</sup> Furthermore, on December 17 and 18 *the tenth round of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in Beijing. Both sides continued to exchange opinions on clarifying and confirming the middle sector alignment.<sup>184</sup>

#### **Zhu Rongji's India visit:**

The year 2002 witnessed the continuation of mutual interaction at the highest political level. Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji visited India from January 13-18, 2002 has been hailed as a new milestone in the Sino-Indian relations. It was significant, as the Chinese Premier was visiting India after a gap of eleven years since Premier Li Peng's visit in 1991 and returned the visit of India's Prime Minister, Narasimha Rao in September 1993. As such, the visit was significant and showed the positive outcome of continuation of political interactions at the high level. The Chinese Premier expressed confidence that his visit would help in promoting mutual trust and cooperation between the two countries and "inject new vitality" for a sound development of the Sino-Indian constructive partnership in the new century.<sup>185</sup> The Chinese Premier stressed that China was "willing to work with the Indian government and people to continuously push forward Sino-Indian relations on the basis of the five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence".<sup>18</sup>

During his visit, Premier Zhu put forward five-point proposal to develop bilateral relations:

1. Maintaining high-level mutual visits, and exchanges in different fields;

2. Strengthening mutual beneficial cooperation in economic and trade fields;
3. Improving the exchanges and cooperation in scientific and technological fields;
4. Promoting regional economic cooperation, and
5. Properly resolving problems in the bilateral relations.

During Chinese Premier's India visit, significant progress was made in the economic sphere. On January 14, 2002, India and China signed six major agreements in New Delhi, dealing with economic cooperation, tourism, and peaceful developments of outer space, water conservancy, science and culture. Zhu also announced that in order to facilitate personnel exchanges between the two sides, the Chinese side have decided to open a regular flight from Beijing to New Delhi from late March 2002. Further, Premier Zhu met with the top Indian leadership and exchanged views on bilateral, regional and international issues. He stated that there is more consensus than division, more interest than friction, and problems between the two nations can be solved through consultation. Agreeing with his Chinese counterpart, the Indian Prime Minister said China does not pose any threat to India, nor does India believe that China regards India as a threat. The President, K.R. Narayanan and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh shared the same view and said that the existing problems between the two nations should not hinder the development of Sino-Indian ties.<sup>187</sup>

On border issue, Zhu remarked that after years of efforts, both sides had reached consensus on the important principle of "mutual understanding, accommodation and adjustment" and had signed two important agreements on maintaining peace and tranquillity and taking CBMs along the LAC in the border areas. Vajpayee hoped India to establish dialogue mechanism with the Chinese side in various fields and also expects the annual consultation of the JWG on the border issue to continue. Vajpayee underscored the need to resolve border issue in a "just, reasonable and mutually acceptable way". Both sides expressed satisfaction on the work being done by the JWG and Expert Group for the resolution of border issue. Both sides agreed to accelerate the process of clarification and confirmation of the LAC along the Sino-Indian boundary. On relations between India and Pakistan, the Chinese Premier repeated China's position on the issue, noting that as a friendly neighbour of both countries, China sincerely hoped that both sides could resolve their disputes through consultation and other peaceful methods.<sup>188</sup>

Zhu further proposed that India and China work together to promote each other in the Information Technology sector and “make progress together”. In short, the visit of Zhu Rongji was a major step forward in the peace process of Sino-Indian negotiations. The visit has enhanced the friendship between India and China, increased bilateral understanding and trust, and promoted exchange and cooperation in wide ranging fields.<sup>189</sup> Therefore, the visit of Chinese Premier, Zhu Rongji was an important step forward in further improving the bilateral relations between both sides.

The meeting of Sino-Indian Joint S & T committee on Scientific and Technological cooperation was held in New Delhi on February 8, 2002.<sup>190</sup> On March 5, *the eleventh meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in New Delhi. During the meeting both sides exchanged opinions on clarifying and confirming the LAC alignment establishing more CBI's and general improvement of over all relationship.<sup>191</sup> Later in March, Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister of India paid a five-day visit to China from March 29 to April 2, 2002.<sup>192</sup> The visit was marked by his assertion that India and China, in a major step towards an eventual resolution of the vexations boundary dispute, have agreed to complete the delineation of the line of Actual Control (LAC) on their contested border within a reasonable time frame. Jaswant Singh stated that the accelerated schedule for talks on the LAC “is something India has not been able to achieve for the last fifty years”.<sup>193</sup> He said that after the successful conclusion of the exchange of maps on the middle sector of the border, earlier in March 2002, the two sides would begin an exchange of maps on the western sector in June.<sup>194</sup> Both nations hope to conclude the process of clarification of the western sector by the end of this year. Maps relating to the eastern sector will be exchanged early next year. In the words of Minister, once the exchange of maps is complete, there will be “very little scope for confusion” and the process of delineation will begin. This development, according to Jaswant Singh will help both sides to reach a settlement of the dispute.<sup>195</sup>

In course of interaction with the Chinese academic community at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, the Foreign Minister was asked whether it was possible to resolve the boundary dispute. The Minister said, “it can and must be resolved. The shadows of the past should not be allowed to affect the future” of bilateral relations. It would be “a crime against our people and humanity if we allowed it to happen”. He added that both the Governments were addressing the issues relating to the boundary in a “purposeful manner and will continue to do so in the

future.<sup>196</sup> The Minister's statement underlined more keenness on the part of India to resolve the border issue in the face of China's insistence on patience to resolve the issue. *The twelfth meeting of Sino-Indian Expert Group* was held in Beijing on June 17, 2002. Both sides exchanged views on the building up of trust and implementation of the CBMs, but did not exchange western sector maps as planned. Commenting on the ongoing round of meetings to resolve the border issue, one analyst wrote that "Given the current tempo of the talks, however, the clarification of the entire LAC will not be a short term process; there will be great leap forward to a final settlement about the alignment of the entire border. Moreover, China's reluctance to set a time frame to clarify and confirm the LAC may result in a delay of the border resolution".

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#### **Fourteenth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

Fourteenth meeting of the Joint Working Group was held on November 21, 2002 in New Delhi. China's Vice-Foreign Minister, Wang Yi, led the Chinese delegation, while Foreign Secretary of India represented the Indian side. It was decided that the exchange of maps in the western sector of the LAC would be discussed at the next meeting. Since 1960 no maps were exchanged in the contentious western sector. It has been considerable time since the maps of the middle sector were exchanged. According to a spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, these were "complicated issues" and both sides were approaching these in a "constructive manner". The spokesperson also revealed that the dates for a visit by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to China, were "under discussion". In a statement, the spokesman said that "a detailed review of bilateral relations between India and China since the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the JWG on July 31, 2001, took place" during the fourteenth round of talks. According to the statement, "both sides also viewed the functioning of the existing dialogue mechanisms such as on counter terrorism and security. The usefulness of these dialogues and need to sustain and broaden them was reaffirmed". Regional issues were also discussed and China said it did not judge relations with India simply from a South Asia perspective. The JWG has generated remarkable results in initiating the CBMs. Its achievement on the alignment of the LAC has been limited.

In January 2003 the speaker of Indian Parliament, Lok Sabha, Manohar Joshi visited China as part of high-level contacts. Defence Minister, George Fernandes paid a weeklong official visit to China from April 21-28, 2003 at the invitation of Chinese

Defence Minister, General Cao Gangchuan. George Fernandes was only the second Defence Minister of India to visit China; Sharad Pawar was the first (1992). There is not much defence cooperation between India and China; however, since the inking of 1993 and 1996 agreements on building CBMs, the defence ties have become pertinent for building any “mutual trust and understanding”.<sup>198</sup> It was after an eleven years gap and first since Pokharan-II tests<sup>199</sup> that an Indian Defence Minister visited China. During his visit, both sides decided to step-up military-to-military exchanges hold a counter terrorism dialogue and increase CBMs to maintain peace along the LAC, paving the way for the final resolution of the boundary dispute.<sup>200</sup> The two countries have had a friendly relationship for 99.9 percent of their mutual interface and that only 0.1 percent was unpleasant-an oblique reference to the negative events of 1962 and 1998.<sup>201</sup>

No concrete breakthrough accrued from Fernandes’s visit, the visit, however, was a forward looking one, essential for building CBMs between the two countries. The visit symbolized continuation of amicable high-level political contact between the two Asian giants. It also laid background for up coming visit of the Indian Prime Minister.<sup>202</sup> The new central leadership in China attached great importance to relations with India and would like to work with India to greatly strengthen cooperation in all areas and bring bilateral constructive and cooperative partnership to a new level.<sup>203</sup>

### **Fifteenth Meeting of the Joint Working Group:**

The Joint Working Group (JWG) held its fifteenth round of talks in Beijing towards the end of March 2005. The heads of the delegations – Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei expressed satisfaction over the resumption of the process after a hiatus of about two and a half years.<sup>204</sup> The Indian Embassy said in a statement in Beijing after the conclusion of the Expert Group meeting as well as the Joint Working Group, that the discussions in JWG-15 were held over three sessions and were positive and forward-looking. Both sides reviewed the on-going process of Line of Actual Control (LAC) clarification and confidence building measures.<sup>205</sup> No maps were exchanged during the three sessions of the J.W.G.

Eventually this can be perceived that despite fifteen meetings of Joint Working Group and close discussions on boundary dispute between the two countries,

they could not reach to the final solutions. Still great expectations were attached with Vajpayee's forthcoming visit to China.

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