

CHAPTER VI

Chapter-VI

Resolution through Special Representatives

The Indian Premier A.B. Vajpayee's visit from June 22 to 27, 2003 possessed an outstanding significance in the negotiated settlement process between India and China. Among the PM's he was the fourth who visited China in five decades of India's independence. He was not new to China; he had visited China in 1979 as the External Affairs Minister of the Janata Government, and in 1993 as a part of the Parliamentary delegations. The visit was significant as the Indian Prime Minister was visiting China after a gap of 10 years. More importantly, it was first visit at the highest level since 1998 nuclear detonations.¹

During his visit (June 2003), the Prime Minister held extensive talks with President, the Hu Jintao, Chairman of the Central Military Commission and former President, Jiang Zemin and Vice President, Zeng Qinghong. During his talks with Wen, various issues including border, Sikkim and cross-border terrorism figured. The talks and meetings were said to be held in a "sincere and friendly atmosphere." Both sides expressed "satisfaction" on the progress made over recent years in bilateral relations, and noted that the sustained economic and social development in the two countries, representing one third of humanity was vital for ensuring peace, stability and prosperity not only in Asia but also in the whole world.²

During Vajpayee's China visit, India and China signed a joint declaration and nine documents on cooperation in economy, law and justice, science and technology and culture. The documents include:

1. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation between the Supreme People's Procuratorate of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Law and Justice of the Government of the Republic of India.
2. Executive Programme on education cooperation and exchange between the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Human Resource development of the Government of India.
3. Protocol of Phytosanitary Requirements for Exporting Mangoes from India to China between the General Administration of Quality Supervision, Inspection and Quarantine of the People's Republic of China and Ministry of Agriculture of India;

4. MoU on Simplifying Visa Procedures between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of India.
5. MoU for Enhanced cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy between the Ministry of Water Resources, the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy sources, the Government of the Republic of India;
6. MoU of Cooperation in the field of Ocean Science and Technology between the State Oceanic Administration (SOA) of the People's Republic of China and the department of Ocean Development of the Government of the Republic of India;
7. MoU between the National Science Foundation of the People's Republic of China and the Department of Science and Technology of the Republic of India.
8. MoU between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of India on the Reciprocal Establishment of Cultural Centres in their capitals; and
9. Executive Programme of the Cultural Exchanges between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Republic of India for 2003-2005.

Most significant of all documents was the Joint Declaration on Principles for Relations and Comprehensive Cooperation between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of India.³ The joint declaration was the first of its kind between India and China. Further, according to the joint declaration, India and China exchanged views on the boundary question and "expounded" their respective positions. Both sides reiterated their readiness to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution to the boundary issue through consultations on an equal footing. Moreover, "the two sides agreed that pending an ultimate solution, they should work together to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas, and reiterated their commitment to continue implementation of the agreements signed for this purpose, including the clarification of the Line of Actual Control".⁴ Apart from these both nations agreed to the nomination of special representative who will try and work out a framework for a boundary settlement from an overarching political perspective.⁵

The Prime Minister after he returned stated that the boundary issue will be taken up soon on "the basis of the principles discussed which were to be followed for an eventual settlement." He elaborated; the exploration will be for a boundary settlement "from the perspective of the overall bilateral relation."⁶ India named National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra as its Special Representative to explore

from the political perspective, settlement of the protracted border issue with China within the overall bilateral framework. China on its part appointed Dai Bingguo, its senior most Vice Minister in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as its Special Representatives, signalling a strong desire on both side to expedite resolution of the vexed boundary question. Both sides agreed to continue maintenance of peace and tranquillity on the LAC, and to have high-level dialogue architecture and decided that foreign ministers of the two countries would meet annually.⁷

Obviously, the declaration would mean frequent and regular high-level exchange between the two countries in all fields including defence. The frequent visits are believed to greatly enhance mutual understanding and expand bilateral relations. Work done by the JWG and JEG are reaffirmed, and yet another expert group named as Joint Study Group (JSG) was established.⁸ The Group is led by the Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, Dr. Rakesh Mohan, from the Indian side and by Vice Minister of Commerce Mr. An Min on the Chinese side. The JSG will be composed of officials and economists who will examine the potential complementarities between the two countries in expanded trade and economic cooperation. The JSG would also draw up a programme for the development of Sino-India trade and economic cooperation for the next five years, aimed at encouraging greater cooperation between the business communities of both sides.⁹ Now economics has begun to drive the relationship.

The phrase “equal footing” used in the declaration could indicate that Beijing will negotiate on the basis of “give and take” as has been done with regard to Tibet and Sikkim, New Delhi and Beijing are aware that history has stood still after the 1962 conflict in the matter of resolving the border dispute. Aksaichin, the territory ceded by Pakistan to China in the early 1960s and Arunachal Pradesh, remain the bone of contention. Clearly, Mishra and Dai had a tough task on their hands.¹⁰ Though the fact of complex nature of the border issue is indisputable but the step-by-step approach pursued by both sides in a forward looking manner would go long way in eventually resolving the issue. In the words of an eminent expert, “with the adoption of a political approach to the problem, it has become easier to surmount this obstacle.”¹¹

India for the first time officially recognised Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as a part of the territory of the People’s Republic of China and reiterated that it will not allow the Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India. The

Chinese side expressed its appreciation for the Indian position and reiterated that it was “firmly opposed to any attempt and action aimed at splitting China and bringing about independence of Tibet.”¹² On the MoU on border trade reached by the two sides, Nathu La between Sikkim and Tibet that was closed after the 1962 conflict was opened for trade. The MoU said: “Desirous of opening another pass on the Sino-Indian border and setting up an additional point on each side for border trade the Indian side agrees to designate Changgu of Sikkim state as the venue for border trade market; the Chinese side agreed to designate Renquiggang of the Tibet Autonomous region as the venue for border trade market”.¹³

China’s recognition of Sikkim as an integral part of India in an indirect way by the agreement on expanding border trade was a positive development. The Foreign Minister Yashwant Sinha described the accords reached by both sides as a win-win situation for both the countries. On the decision to upgrade talks on border issue with the appointment of Special Political Representatives, the minister described the step as a “very big development.”¹⁴

Despite all these anticipations and positive views differences on LAC have been located and identified in the areas in East-Namka Chu, Chenju, Tulang La, Asaphila, Longju and Che Dong. In middle sector – Bara Hoti and four other areas and in West Trig Heights, Chushul, Konkga Pass, Pangong Lake and Demchok in the South, traversed by the Indus and three others.¹⁵

Border issue cropped up again, it was incident of June 26, 2003, when 10 man Indian party was detained and captured in Arunachal Pradesh and were lately released near Yume Chu river three kilometres deeper inside the Line of Actual control.¹⁶ in reaction, the Indian government resented and expressed that Chinese are not following the 1996 provisions. Mr Sinha retaliated that this area was the ‘bone of contention’, and those sporadic incidents would lead to enhanced complexity.¹⁷ In spite of such set backs by the Chinese government use of CBMs, exchange of maps, clarification of positions and appointing Special Representatives – are collectively good reflections in the direction to resolve the issues.

Special Representatives to address Border issue:

Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to China as the Minister of External Affairs in 1979 opened up a new chapter in Indian thinking about the relationship with China

after 1962 war. His visit to China in 2003 as a Prime Minister added a new dimension to the process of negotiation between India and China. He added a new feather to his cap by initiating a more purposeful negotiation on the boundary dispute and a more imaginative approach to future economic cooperation.

Fundamentally, both Rajiv Gandhi and A.B. Vajpayee were instrumental in burying the 'victim mentality' that India carried since the 1962 war with China. A new generation in India with greater self-confidence about its own future was now capable of thinking about the difficult issues with China in a more relaxed manner. The initiative for recasting the relationship with China stemming from both the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party is reflective of national consensus, essential to deal with the emotive boundary question with China. Just as a new national consensus has emerged in India on the need for a broader and deeper relationship with China, Beijing too has demonstrated considerable pragmatism in recent years to take the relationship forward.¹⁸

The biggest political outcome from the Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China was that both India and China decided to explore the political scope for evolving the framework of a boundary settlement. For this purpose, in a new zone of realism, both sides agreed to appoint a 'Special Representative' each to "explore, from the political perspective of the overall bilateral relationship, the framework of a boundary settlement". Dai Bingguo, the senior Vice-Minister of China and Brajesh Mishra, the National Security Adviser of India were nominated to undertake this exercise.¹⁹ The work of Special Representatives is to set the "political principles" to resolve the issue.²⁰ Unlike the earlier mechanism, the Joint Working Group at the Foreign Secretary level which met once a year, the boundary talks between the special representatives are expected to be purposeful and result-oriented.²¹ It was expected that the new initiative would accelerate the search for a solution to the vexed problem.²² Between 2003 and 2007, special representatives have held eleven rounds of talks.

The First Round of Special Representatives to address the Contentious border dispute:

India's special representative on Sino-Indian boundary question and National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra held the first round of talks with the Chinese Special Representative and Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo on October 23, 2003 in New

Delhi. The objective was to enhance bilateral cooperation in the non-traditional security sector.²³ According to a Chinese Foreign Ministry official, both sides held a useful discussion on the guidelines and principles for solving the border issue.²⁴ In spite of all these efforts, the two sides could not reach any positive result. Although the motive of Special Representatives was almost the same as of Joint Working Group and Expert Group etc i.e. to help in resolving the border issue.

The Second Round of Special Representative to address the Contentious border dispute:

The second round of Special Representatives was held on January 12 and 13, 2004 in Beijing. The discussion was held in a friendly and constructive atmosphere between the special representative of India and National Security Advisor Brajesh Mishra and the Chinese Special Representative and Vice-Foreign Minister, Dai Bingguo.²⁵

Positive progress was made during two rounds of Sino-Indian border talks at the political level to find a comprehensive boundary settlement.²⁶ A part from political perspective India and China discussed economic cooperation and showed possibility of signing a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and a Free Trade Agreement (FTA).²⁷ The Sino-Indian Joint Study Group (JSG) on trade and economic cooperation held its first meeting on March 22-23, 2004 at Beijing. Further both countries agreed to increase contacts and interactions between their defence establishments and armed forces. During the meeting between visiting Defence Minister of China Cao Gangchuan and Defence Minister, George Fernandes on March 28, 2004 in New Delhi, measures agreed upon to improve bilateral ties included increased friendly interaction between personnel at the line of Actual Control and granting of the observer status to the military officers at each other's military exercise. On the boundary question both sides expressed themselves in favour of an early resolution and examined new proposals to strengthen and develop defence exchanges and confidence building. This gave rise to new hopes of a "bright future" in bilateral economic front and indirectly helps in resolving boundary question.

China for the first time officially showed Sikkim as a part of India. The world map in the first published "*World Affairs Year Book 2003 / 2004*" stopped showing Sikkim as a special country in Asia and does not mention Sikkim separately in its index of countries.²⁸ Flourishing political interaction uninterrupted dialogue channels and stronger mutual trust between India and China in 2003 helped in making

“progress” in dealing with problems left over from history. China on May 31, 2004 took another significant step to recognise Sikkim as a part of India by not showing the North-Eastern state as an independent country in *the Annual Year Book of the Foreign Ministry*.

With the commencement of Congress led United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government after Lok Sabha election in May 2004, JN Dixit was appointed as New Security Advisor in place of Brajesh Mishra.²⁹ Referring to Rajiv Gandhi’s diplomatic odyssey that helped “improve and normalize” ties with China, Prof. Wang Hongwei felt that Ms Gandhi will continue the trend started by her husband. This means that the latest political change in New Delhi could produce positive effect on the Sino-Indian equation. In fact, the pace may be faster, not slower under a government led by Ms Gandhi.³⁰

During third Asia Cooperation Dialogue meeting (ACD) India, China, Pakistan and leaders from 19 other countries on June 22, 2004 agreed to move “hand-in-hand” to build a better Asia and pledged to resolve disputes among them through dialogue to preserve peace and security in the region.³¹ From the above discussion, it is understood that both sides have managed to narrow down the differences in perception and their approaches to the problem. They also acquainted each other with some technical irritants such as the marking of contours on the maps.³²

The Third Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

The third round of Sino-Indian talks to address boundary dispute was held on January 27, 2004, The India side was led by India’s Special Representative and National Security Advisor, JN Dixit and the Chinese side was led by Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. According to an External Affairs Ministry news release the talks were held in a friendly, constructive and cooperative atmosphere. The talks involved reviewing the guiding principles for the talks that had been formulated in the previous two meetings. The two sides agreed to hold the next meeting in Beijing on a mutually convenient date.³³ China appreciated the positive stance of the UPA government towards China.³⁴ As a part of CBMs, India and Chinese border personnel met in Ladakh frontier region on October 20, 2004 and discussed issues like border violations, smuggling construction of roads and other defence related work.³⁵

The Fourth Round of Special Representatives:

To find an early and mutually acceptable solution to the vexed border issue the next round was held in Beijing on November 18 & 19, 2004, again between National Security Advisor JN Dixit and Chinese Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. The Indian delegation comprised of India's Ambassador to China, Nalin Surie, senior officials from the Ministry of External Affairs and the PMO.³⁶

During meeting both sides have frank and detailed discussion on exchange of views regarding principles, in a friendly, constructive and cooperative atmosphere.³⁷ Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhang Qujue said that, "we hope that the two representatives will, proceeding from the common understanding reached by the two leaders (PMs) and also proceeding from the over all relations between our two countries, further explore the guiding principles regarding the solution to the border issue".³⁸

On January 6, 2005, India and China decided to maintain positive momentum in bilateral ties with a long-term strategic perspective covering resolution of the vexed border issue. The sudden death of J.N Dixit in early January 2005 created a vacuum in the galaxy of Indian "Foreign Services". The Chinese state Councillor Tang Jiakuan as well Beijing's Special Representative on Sino-Indian boundary question appreciated Dixit's contribution in the direction of bilateral relations. The Chinese government send condolence message to K Natwar Singh, External Affairs Minister, Chinese Special Representative, Dai pointed out that during Dixit's period, both countries made fruitful progress and formulated the political guiding principles for the solution of the boundary question. Mr. Dai further anticipated that the unfinished task would undertaken forward. The meeting of Special Representatives on boundary question between India and China would continue to explore new frontier in this direction.³⁹ During January 2005, India and China held their first ever "strategic dialogue" at the official level, with the Foreign Secretary, Shyam Saran, heading the Indian delegation, and the Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister, Wu Dawei, leading the Chinese side. The meeting reviewed the current state of bilateral relations, the role of international institutions and situation in Iraq. There was no fixed agenda, as it was for the first time that the two countries negotiated such a dialogue.⁴⁰

The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Kong Quan said: "We hope that with India's cooperation we will be able to solve the border issue so that bilateral relations will witness faster development on a new basis".⁴¹ The

upcoming visit of the Chinese Premier, Wen Jiabao to India was also highlighted. Both side discussed the border issue and appreciated the work so far done by special representatives. The Joint Working Groups headed by Foreign Secretaries could not meet for last two years the real focus had been on the ‘Special Representatives’ on the border question. India and China had shown considerable maturity in advancing their relations and diversifying their bilateral discussions over the years while continuing to discuss their differences on the boundary question.⁴²

On February 1, 2005 China welcomed the resurgence in Sino-Indian relations and expressed its willingness to forge stable and sustained development of ties with India.⁴³ Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing while meeting with Indian Ambassador Nalin Surie on February 10, stated, that China was willing to “unswervingly” push forward the friendly and mutually beneficial cooperative ties with India.⁴⁴ India and China had adopted a pragmatic approach to resolve their boundary as well other disputes through a sustained dialogue process by appointing Joint Committee.⁴⁵ China and India are not competitors, but are friends. Such a robust view of the state of play on the bilateral front was articulated by Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao at a media conference in Beijing in March, several weeks ahead of his significant visit to India.

The Joint Working Group (JWG) held its fifteenth rounds 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 two and a half years.⁴⁶ 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 ongoing process of Line of Actual Control (LAC) clarification and confidence building measures.⁴⁷ No maps were exchanged during the three sessions of the JWG.

The interplay between the Joint Working Group and the Special Representatives may become important as the process to evolve a boundary settlement gathers momentum. However, there is no authoritative indication from either side at this point about the possibilities on this front.⁴⁸ Describing the latest round of boundary talks with China as “positive and forward looking”, India on March 31, 2005 said that the two sides had agreed to schedule another crucial meeting

at the Special Representative level to address the issue from an “over all perspective” prior to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao’s India visit.⁴⁹

The fourth coming visit by Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao to India was seen by both the countries as new buoyancy in several spheres, especially trade, during the cordial phase of Sino-Indian relations. While the visit acknowledges the changing global and regional dimensions of international diplomacy, both countries are now equally convinced of each other’s strategic concerns. This affords new hope to an amicable resolution of past disputes that have long mired in suspicious relations between the two countries.⁵⁰

The fifth Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

The fifth round of talks was held on April 9-12, 2005 in New Delhi, during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India.⁵¹ The Indian side was led by India's Special Representative and National Security Advisor, M.K. Narayanan and the Chinese side was led by Senior Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo. This was the first formal meeting between M.K. Narayanan and Dai since being appointed as Special Representatives of India. During the fifth round of talks, the "guiding principles" which have been made under negotiation for several months, were given finishing touch.⁵² Both Special Representatives, signed the accord which said the two sides will take into account "historical evidence national sentiments, practical difficulties and reasonable concerns and sensitivities of both sides and the actual state of border areas."⁵³

The two countries were seeking a political settlement of the boundary question in the context of their overall and long-term interests. They decided not to use or threaten to use force against the other by any means.⁵⁴ The two sides expressed satisfaction over the progress made in the discussions between Special Representatives of the two countries and welcomed the conclusion of the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the settlement of the boundary question. Further both sides revealed the desire for an early settlement of the border issue.⁵⁵ That the two sides would give due consideration to each others "strategic and reasonable interests", and the principle of mutual and equal security was duly emphasised by the Special Representatives of both the countries.⁵⁶

India's special representative to China M.K. Narayanan told a television channel that India and China were ready to move forward in a spirit of give and takes, forgetting past mistakes. Both side could produce a new "Asian age".⁵⁷ The talks were held in a friendly and candid manner. The engagement with China was progressing in the right direction.

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to India:

Mr. Wen Jiabao, Premier of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, paid a state visit to India from April 9-12, 2005.⁵⁸ The four-day visit by Mr. Wen Jiabao, was the fourth by a Chinese Premier, after Chou En-Lai in 1954 and Li Peng in 1991, and Zhu Rogji in 2002 in 55 years of diplomatic

interaction to visit India.⁵⁹ During the visit, premier Wen Jiabao held talks with Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, called on President Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and Vice President Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat also and met Chairperson of United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Smt. Sonia Gandhi, External Affairs Minister Shri K Natwar Singh and leaders of the opposition, Shri L.K. Advani. The leaders of the two countries had an in depth exchange of views and reached broad consensus on bilateral relations and international and regional issues of common concern.⁶⁰

A “new chapter” in the friendly relations and cooperation between the two countries was opened by Wen’s visit which had marked a new level in Sino-Indian relationship. Twelve accords were signed to bolster trade and economic cooperation, aviation and cultural links.⁶¹ While addressing the students of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in New Delhi, the Chinese Premier said that the 21st Century belong to Asia if India and China developed close relations and worked together. By giving several instances of great Indian leaders he quoted from the writings of Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and even Amartya Sen. He ended his speech by reinforcing the slogan of the 1950s, “Hindi-Chini, Bhai-Bhai”. Reviving the five decades old slogan, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao asserted that the two countries were not rivals or competitors but friendly neighbours who were out to further improve their relations through cooperation.⁶²

China put an end to the 30-year old controversy between the two countries, by presenting the Indian Government with the newly printed official map, which showed the State of Sikkim as part of Indian Union. Sikkim now formally ceases to be a cause of friction between the two countries. New Delhi, on its part had recognised before the Chinese leader’s visit the Tibetan Autonomous Region as part of Chinese territory.⁶³ The process of exchanging maps indicted their respective perceptions of the entire alignment of the LAC on the basis of already agreed parameters with the objective of arriving at a common understanding of the alignment as soon as possible.⁶⁴ To mark the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India

and China in 2005, the two countries decided to organise a series of commemorative activities. Two sides declared 2006 as the “year of Sino-Indian friendship”.

During the visit, the leaders of the two countries have therefore, agreed to establish an India-China Strategic and Cooperative Partnership for Peace and Prosperity based on the principles of Panchsheel, mutual respect and sensitivity for each others concerns and aspirations and equality. Both the countries also agreed for high-level exchanges between the governments, Parliaments and political parties of the two countries. The two sides also reiterated their intention to promote regular ministerial-level exchanges and make full use of the Sino-Indian strategic dialogue and other bilateral dialogue mechanisms.

Indicating a new flexibility on both sides, the two sides exchanged views on the Sino-Indian boundary question and reiterated their readiness to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable solution, through equal and friendly consultations and proceeding from the overall interest of bilateral relations. They expressed satisfaction over the progress made in the discussions between the Special Representatives of the two countries and welcomed the conclusion of the 11-point Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the settlement of the boundary question. Both sides are convinced that an early settlement of the boundary question will advance the basic interests of the two countries and should therefore, be pursued as a strategic objective. They expressed their commitment to the mechanism of Special Representatives for seeking a political settlement of the boundary question in the context of their long-term interests and the overall bilateral relationship.⁶⁵

This embodies a transitional shift from the legal historical approach to a political approach and puts the negotiations of the border on a new plane. Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing described it as “the first political document in the past 20 years for resolving the boundary issue”.⁶⁶ Pending a final resolution, the two sides decided to continue to make joint efforts to maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas in accordance with the agreements of 1993 and 1996 and also agreed that while continuing the

discussions between the Special Representatives, it was also pertinent that the Joint Working Group Continued its work to seek an early clarification and confirmation of the Line of Actual Control (LAC). Progress made so far on the clarification of the LAC in the Sino-Indian border areas was noted. Both the countries agreed to complete the process of exchanging maps indicating their respective perceptions of the entire alignment of the LAC on the basis of already agreed parameters, with the objective of arriving at a common understanding of the alignment, as soon as possible.⁶⁷

On the other hand the visiting Premier did not categorically support India's candidature for a permanent seat in the United Nations Security Council. Instead, he indicated that "India would be welcomed as an important player" in the U.N. "India hopes to play an important role in the UN and we extend our support", he further said in his speech at the IIT. It was a general perception that China was not willing to give a firm commitment about backing India for a permanent seat in an expanded Security Council.⁶⁸ However, Chinese non-committed response got nothing to do with bilateral progress between India and China.

The two countries agreed to make joint efforts to increase the bilateral trade volume to US \$ 20 billion or higher by 2008 and welcomed the report of the Joint Study Group (JSG). They also agreed to promote the cooperation in the spheres of education, science and technology, healthcare, information, tourism, youth exchange, agriculture, dairy development, sports and other fields on the basis of mutual benefit and reciprocity and decided to establish an India-China Steering Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation chaired by their Ministers for Science and Technology, and start consultations on an agreement on mutual recognition of academic certifications and degrees between India and China.⁶⁹

In spite of the above development, a couple of problems necessitated resolution especially the demarcation of the 4,056 km long line of actual control, besides contesting claims over Arunachal Pradesh 2000 sq km area in Uttaranchal and Himachal Pradesh and 38,000 sq km in Aksai Chin. Another

point of difference is on Beijing's concern about the growing Indo- US relationship, as Beijing does not want Delhi to be a part of any axis. Thirdly, the differences remain on Beijing's nuclear and missile support to Pakistan.⁷⁰

Eventually, both the leaders heralded that difference on border issue and some other moves to fulfill their national interest according to the demand of time will not over shadow their bilateral relations. Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran described the visit as an "extremely successful one that would produce far reaching results" and soon draws the "attention of the world". Sino-Indian friendship was important for Asia and the world.⁷¹ The visit was path breaking as the two neighbours signed a number of agreements, besides evolving a set of 11 "political parameters and Guiding Principles" to resolve the vexed 43 years old boundary dispute. The Panchsheel partners have made a new beginning to cope with a new world environment.⁷²

The ups and downs of bilateral relations over the past 55 years have offered a plethora of lessons for the leaders of the two countries. They are building a more mature relationship based on rationality and pragmatism... this positive momentum on the economic front gave wings to the advancement of bilateral ties.⁷³ India and China were among the fastest growing economies of the 21st century, and the expansion of economic cooperation was one of the key priority areas. Combining the strong points of both the countries could help to achieve a faster and greater development in the global order.⁷⁴

China on April 21, 2005 stressed that Sino-Indian friendship and cooperation was "a major contribution" to the "whole humanity".⁷⁵ Coordination and cooperation among them served the interest of peace and stability in the region and the world at large.⁷⁶ On May 25, 2005, the Chief of Staff of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA), Liang Guanglie, during his meeting with National Security Advisor, M.K. Narayanan, who was also India's Special Representative on the Sino-Indian boundary issue, in New Delhi stated that China was willing to solve the boundary issue with India on the basis to equality and consultation with mutual understanding and concessions.⁷⁷ Besides, Manmohan Singh the Prime Minister of India on June 11, 2005 stated that efforts will be made to open trade routes with Aksai Chin area. He also stated that a

conversation would be made with China for opening up the route to Kailash Mansarover through Ladakh, so that the time of pilgrimage to one of the most sacred religious place could be reduced.⁷⁸

In July, Union Commerce Minister Kamal Nath and his Chinese counterpart Bo Xilai met in Dalin (China) on the margins of multilateral meeting and agreed that the two countries should oppose the ongoing moves by the developed countries to divide developing countries on the basis of trade and other economic issues. Eventually, Chinese leader expressed his belief that the two countries “are on the same wavelength”.

The Sixth Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

India’s Special Representative on Sino-Indian boundary question and National Security Advisor, MK Narayanan held the sixth round of talks with the Chinese Special Representative and Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo on September 26-28, 2005 in Beijing. The sixth round in this high-level series since 2003-took place in a friendly, cooperative and constructive atmosphere.

The meeting was originally planned for September 26 and 27, but continued to the third day of formal sessions. This, in itself was seen as a noteworthy development. Special Representatives of both the countries have now begun the “second phase of negotiations” under their big-picture mandate of exploring “the framework of a boundary settlement” by addressing the issue from the “political perspective” of the overall bilateral relationship. The two sides now took note of the “sound groundwork” that had been done in the form of the agreement. And they undertook a “conscientious exploration” of the framework for an eventual boundary settlement.

The Chinese view was that the “sound momentum” of the ongoing evolution of a “strategic and cooperative partnership” between the two countries had provided “favourable conditions” now, more than ever before, for shaping a final settlement of an issue “left over from history”. With these new beginning both the sides have now begun to exert efforts, from the all-important political perspective, to fashion a framework that could then serve as a settlement or lead to a solution.⁷⁹

India and China had agreed to speed up the process of resolving their long-standing border disputes on the basis of agreed principles, Prime Minister

Manmohan Singh said on December 14, 2005, that, he had very good discussions with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and both the Heads of the States felt that the negotiations should be expedited. He further thought that it was possible to move forward at a faster pace.⁸⁰ In a New Year message to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that the fast developing ties between India and China were an important determinant for the peace and security as well as development and prosperity of Asia and the World.⁸¹

The second round of the Strategic Dialogue between India and China took place in Beijing on January 9-10, 2006.⁸² The Indian side was led by Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, India's Ambassador to China Nalin Surie and Joint Secretary (East Asia) Ashok Kantha participated in the talks, the Chinese side was led by Vice-Foreign Minister Wu Dawei.⁸³ The second round of strategic dialogue aimed at enhancing co-operation and co-ordination in regional and global issues of common concern. The strategic dialogue was not limited to the bilateral dimensions. It exceeded to regional and global dimensions too.

During the second round of Sino-Indian strategic dialogue, the delegations of both the countries discussed how to address the boundary question, among various "outstanding issues", in a "proactive manner". Both sides are committed to seek an early settlement on the basis of the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles.⁸⁴ It reflects the readiness of the two sides to resolve outstanding differences without letting them come in the way of the continued development of bilateral relations.⁸⁵

While addressing the Shanghai Institute of International Studies in Shanghai, Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran said that "the old mindset of balance of power or conflict of interests" between India and China were "outdated" as the ties between the two big neighbours had acquired a "long-term, global and strategic character".⁸⁶ India believes that there is enough space and opportunity in Asia and beyond for the two countries to grow. The simultaneous emergence of India and China as Asian and global powers, made it imperative for them to be sensitive to each other's interests and aspirations. The prevailing global paradigm of cooperation among major powers also demanded that they work together to mutually support their rightful place in the comity of nations.⁸⁷

The other key aspects of the strategic dialogue covered “a certain convergence of views” on the current international situation, the importance of global responses to global challenges, United Nations reform including that of the Security Council, the creation of an East Asia Community, and trilateral cooperation involving not only India and China but also Russia.⁸⁸ The qualitative up-gradation of the relationship between India and China has been manifested because of their level of strategic and global landscape in diverse areas. The Friendship Year “is truly a tribute to the distance traversed through friendly exchanges and contacts by two nations through labyrinth of time.”⁸⁹

The Chinese Ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi said the dialogue on the issue was part of a series of confidence building exercises being undertaken by the two countries. There were no major impediments to settling the issue except that the area under dispute was large and located at a high altitude, which made demarcation difficult.⁹⁰

The Seventh Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

India and China on March 11, 2006, held high level talks in New Delhi aimed at settling the boundary questions. The Special Representatives-National Security Adviser MK Narayanan and Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo held parleys for about six hours to discuss a mutually – acceptable solution to the decade old issue.⁹¹ Both sides showed confidence in giving a final shape to the basic frame work for settlement in the near future. Mr. Narayanan said that the two sides were negotiating a “package proposal on all sectors of the border” and expressed optimism and satisfaction at the on going discussions. The border talks were held in a constructive and friendly manner.⁹²

The talks were moving in the right direction. The two countries are working to evolve a methodology for the settlement of the dispute, based on parameters and guiding principles agreed, between the two governments earlier.⁹³ The joining of hands by India and China and their pursuit of cooperation and common development carried a “significant meaning” for peace, stability and development in Asia and the world at large, Chinese Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxing said in Beijing on March 28, 2006 while releasing a compilation of important bilateral documents as part of the 2006 Sino-Indian Friendship year.⁹⁴

India and China agreed to share experiences and hold consultations on financial sector. Both the countries expressed concern over the risks to global expansion emanating from the surge in oil prices in the international markets and consequent growing economic imbalances.⁹⁵ On May 29, 2006 India and China signed the first ever memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Defence Ministries of the two countries.⁹⁶ Efforts to find a political settlement to the vexed Sino-Indian boundary dispute by their Special Representatives were viewed during a meeting between Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and visiting Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee on May 31, 2006. Mukherjee emphasised the need for “political will” to resolve the boundary dispute which had worsened Sino-Indian bilateral relations.⁹⁷

Chinese President Hu Jintao said on June 16, 2006, that Sino-Indian relations have entered in a “new phase” and Beijing is committed to forging a long-term strategic cooperative partnership with New Delhi. The joint efforts from both the side shows that the relations between India and China will keep upgrading⁹⁸ (ameliorating).

The Eighth Round of Special Representatives talks:

The eighth round of special representatives talks was held in Beijing from June 25 to 27, 2006 between National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Bingguo – marking another step forward on the slow road to conflict resolution. The two have tasked with finding a package boundary deal within the framework of the guiding principles. The Special Representatives of both the countries continued their discussions on an agreed framework for a boundary settlement on the basis of the Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for settlement of Sino-Indian Boundary Questions.⁹⁹

It was declared during the meeting that both sides in the spirit of mutual respect and mutual understanding make meaningful and mutually acceptable adjustments to their respective positions on the boundary question so as to arrive at a package settlement. The wording of the statement with its reference to the concept of “adjustment” implied a give and take of territory, invoking the old western-eastern sector “swapp” idea once again. In the intervening time both Indian and Chinese leaders have emphasised that pragmatism is key to a swift resolution. With all the

14 countries bordering China it had boundary disputes at some point or the other. However, in recent years. Beijing has managed to settle all but two of its land border disputes, to its own considerable advantage. It is in this context that Beijing is looking to settle the boundary issue with India as well. Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao told India's Special Representative, M.K. Narayanan that you are not only the special representative for the Sino-Indian border talks, but also a friendship envoy and added that the bilateral ties were in "good shape". Several other high level exchanges are being planned, including a visit by Chinese President Hu Jintao to India later in the year.¹⁰⁰ The talks ended in a friendly and candid atmosphere.

Opening a new avenue for enhancing mutual trust, Parliaments of India and China signed an agreement to regularise bilateral exchanges India and China on July 3, agreed that the irritant border dispute between the two countries should be settled peacefully through dialogue while tapping on the mutual goodwill that exists in bilateral relations.¹⁰¹

The reopening of Nathu La trade pass (linking the north eastern India state of Sikkim with Tibet in China) on July 6, 2006, after four decade, opens a new chapter in the Sino-Indian relations that turned icy since the Dalai Lama's flight from Tibet in 1959 and the 1962 Sino-Indian war.¹⁰² The reopening of the Nathu La border trade point had not only presented a profitable chance for bilateral trade, but also signalled a new attitude over the border dispute long haunting the two countries. This was an important landmark in the complicated relations between the two countries and would further help to improve Sino-Indian relations.¹⁰³ Being enriched with growing trade, political and military links the two Asian giants are celebrating 2006 as the "year of friendship".

Shortly before President Hu Jintao's visit to New Delhi, the Chinese Ambassador, Sun Yuxi triggered a diplomatic row claiming Arunachal Pradesh as "Chinese territory", but the demand was strongly rejected by India.¹⁰⁴ Amid India's strong rejection and hue and cry of Chinese claim of sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh, Beijing on November 14 sought to manipulate the issue and said it was the "strategic goal" of the two countries to find an early fair and rational solution to the vexed boundary issue.¹⁰⁵ China on November 15 expressed that the two countries must make "mutual compromises". On disputed issue of Arunachal Pradesh and it was ready to do so. The two countries, through "friendly

consultations”, could arrive at a “mutually acceptable and mutually satisfactory” solution to the issue “left over from history”.¹⁰⁶

President Hu Jintao’s Visit:

Chinese President Mr Hu Jintao paid in November 20, 2006 a three-day visit to India. This was his first visit to India since he took over as the leader of one of the world’s biggest and most flourishing economies. His visit was in a bid to give a new and more dynamic direction to the bilateral relations between India and China in the rapidly changing global diplomatic context.¹⁰⁷ Charting a new course for an “irreversible friendship”. India and China decided to “promote” cooperation in civil nuclear field and sought “innovative and forward looking approaches” to pursue such an endeavour at the international level.

During wide-ranging talks between Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Chinese President Hu Jintao, the two countries agreed to speed up efforts to resolve the nagging boundary dispute and not allow it to hamper all round development of ties. The two also decided to venture on a Ten-pronged strategy to boost up their comprehensive ties in commercial, political and strategic areas, and signed thirteen pacts, including the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPA).

¹⁰⁸

In all, thirteen agreements were signed in the field of economy, trade, finance, energy, science, technology, agriculture, human resource development, education, wild life protection and smuggling of artefacts. The “ten-pronged strategy” revealed the new policy to “fully realise the substantial potential for their cooperation in a wide range of areas like the up-gradation of Sino-Indian relations to a qualitatively new and substantial level further reinforcing their strategic and cooperative partnership.”¹⁰⁹

Dr. Manmohan Singh and President Hu appreciated the progress made by the Special Representatives in their discussions on the boundary question, and they further assured that the Special Representatives “shall complete at an early date”, finalising an appropriate framework for a final package settlement.¹¹⁰ Chinese President Hu hoped the boundary would be converted into a “bond of good-neighbourliness and mutually beneficial cooperation”. He said that the settlement of the boundary issue would contribute to peace and stability in the

region, moreover, China was ready to work with India to “actively seek a fair, just and mutually acceptable solution through friendly consultation on an equal footing”.

Delivering a lecture in New Delhi, he anticipated that peaceful and prosperous South Asia was beneficial for the entire Asia and the world at large. China neither would nor stand in the way of India getting permanent membership of the expanded UN Security Council. China’s willingness to cooperate with India in civil nuclear field was a step in the “right direction in the difficult and complex” relations.¹¹¹

The visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India marked an “important step forward” in the process of developing a cooperative framework of bilateral engagements. It also offered an opportunity to send out a strong signal to the international community that as good neighbours and partners, there was “enough space” for India and China to develop together in a mutually supportive manner, while remaining sensitive to each other’s concerns and aspirations. The External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee said in Lok Sabha on Hu’s visit that they were encouraged by the positive trends in Sino-Indian relations and remained hopeful that their continued engagement with China at the highest level would give further impetus to their bilateral relations and speed up the process of resolution of their outstanding differences.¹¹²

During the meeting in Cebu in the Philippines on the sidelines of India-ASEAN summit, the Prime Minister of India and China urged their Special Representatives to carry out their discussions on the border issue with “greater vigour and greater innovativeness”. Manmohan Singh and Wen Jiabao affirmed the view that the border issue was one that the two sides could solve and were willing to solve. The general ambience of the talks reflected a maturity in the relationship. Besides, a common understanding of the fact that the simultaneous rise of India and China is something that the rest of the world should take note of from an economic, political and strategic perspective.¹¹³

The Ninth Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

Indian and Chinese Special Representatives M.K. Narayanan and Dai Bingguo, who have been tasked with negotiating a settlement of the border

dispute, concluded their ninth round of consultations in New Delhi between January 17-18, 2007.¹¹⁴ As a matter of policy, both the countries have chosen not to give any details of the deliberations that took place between the Special Representatives. Pending the resolution of the boundary question, both sides shall maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas in accordance with the agreements of 1993, 1996 and 2005.¹¹⁵

The Tenth Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

The tenth round of talks between Special Representatives of India and China- National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Executive Vice-Foreign Minister Dai Binguo on the border dispute were held partly in Delhi and partly in Coonoor in Tamil Nadu for three days. A large gamut of issues regarding the 125,000 sq km of disputed border territory was discussed under this series of negotiation. The two Special Representatives held their discussions on a frame work for the boundary settlement on the basis of the Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles reached in 2005.

The talks were held in an open, friendly, cooperative and constructive atmosphere. Both India and China agreed to hold further parleys to find an amicable and mutually beneficial resolution to the decades old dispute. The talks on boundary dispute ended on April 22, 2007 which followed the same pattern as ninth such previous rounds, there was neither any breakthrough nor any breakdown. Leaderships of the two countries have been pushing their Special Representatives to find an early resolution of the issue, as it would serve basic interests of the two neighbours.¹¹⁶

The Eleventh Round of Special Representatives Negotiations:

The eleventh round of negotiations between the Special Representatives of India and China-National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan and Executive Vice Foreign Minister Dai Binguo on the border dispute between the two countries began on September 25, 2007. The talks were focussed on devising a framework agreement for resolving the dispute. Welcoming Mr. Narayanan, the Premier Mr. Wen said that there was “progress” in the ongoing boundary talks.

The latest round of talks comes ahead of a slew of high level bilateral visits. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Congress President Sonia Gandhi are expected to visit China later this year. Vice-Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee Zhang Zhijun told journalists that the upcoming visit to China by Ms. Gandhi would further enhance the mutual understanding and friendship between the leaders of the two countries and promote the exchanges between the two political parties and strive for the development of state-to-state relations.¹¹⁷

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