Chapter 6

Conclusion
As can be seen from the foregoing chapters, India-China relations which are essentially of a bilateral nature are in a large measure, shaped by a complex interplay of regional factors as well as dynamics of global politics.

Following the conflict of 1962, India-China relations were frozen into a state of hostile coexistence. The years between 1963 to 1975, could be termed as the period of stalemate between India and China. The borders were far from stable and peaceful. The Indian Prime Minister. Mrs. Indira Gandhi adopted a flexible posture vis-à-vis and indicated her willingness to reopen a dialogue with China without any preconditions. In response to India's overtures, during the May Day parade at Beijing on 1 May 1970, Chairman Mao shook hands with the Indian charge d'affaires, signalling China's intention to normalise relations with India. But the hopeful pointers evaporated due to Bangladesh crisis and later on the political crisis in Sikkim. It was in 1976 that the first step towards normalisation was taken by India. India announced the appointment of Shri K. R. Narayanan as India's Ambassador to China and China responded quickly.
With the installation of Janata Party regime in India, the new external Affairs Minister, Shri A.B. Vajpayee visited China in 1979. He identified the border problem as the key obstacle to full realisation of normalisation of bilateral relations. The Chinese assurance of stopping support to insurgency in the north east and the gesture of reopening the holy places of Kailash and Mansarovar to Indian pilgrims was one step forward in the improvement of bilateral relations.

In the beginning of 80's, Mrs. Gandhi came back to power and the direct contacts at the highest political level began. In May 1980, the Prime Ministers of both countries met at Belgrade and decided to continue the process of improvement in bilateral relations. More substantial talks took place in June 1981, when the Chinese Foreign Minister, Huang Hua visited India and held extensive talks with Indian leaders. Both sides decided to hold official level talks on bilateral problems and issues. The ice had been broken, but the road to rapprochement was a long and tortuous one.

The New Indian Premier, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi evinced keen interest in improving ties with China. In his first meeting with Chinese counterpart, Zhao Ziyang at New York, both agreed that there was need to push forward the efforts to find a solution to border problem and to promote friendship between the two countries. The years 1986 and 1987, however, witnessed a tense atmosphere on the Sino-Indian
borders, because of Chinese intrusion in the Sumdorong Chu Valley in Arunachal Pradesh. China also lodged a protest against India’s decision of granting statehood to the Union territory of Arunachal Pradesh. Both sides, however, did not allow bilateral relations to deteriorate. By the end of 1987, the eight round of official level talks had made little progress, with each side reiterating its stated position.

Indian Premier, Rajiv Gandhi decided in a bold move to visit China in December, 1988. The historic visit of Rajiv Gandhi to China was a leap forward in the process of India-China rapprochement. During his visit, two Joint Working Groups on border and economic relations were constituted. Further, both sides signed three agreements on intergovernmental cooperation in the field of science and technology, civil aviation and cultural exchanges. With a view to keep up the movement generated by the high level contacts at bilateral plane, Chinese Vice-Premier, Wu Xueqian came to New Delhi in October, 1989 and later on Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen visited India in March, 1990.

In the beginning of 90's, the combined effect of rapid changing international scenario, regional politics and domestic compulsions, pushed India and China, on a firmer and closer path of rapprochement. Chinese Premier, Li Peng paid an official visit to India in December, 1991 and both sides signed three agreements, i.e. resumption of border trade, reopening of consulates in Bombay and
Shangai and cooperation in peaceful applications of outer space sciences and technology. As a result of the summit level talks, India-China relations registered all round improvement. On the border issue, both sides agreed to ensure, peace and tranquility on the Line of Actual control. Now, both sides were following step-by-step approach to resolve this sensitive and complex issue. Further to broaden bilateral relations, India and China moved forward to cooperate in the field of economic, science and technology and cultural areas. As a result of all these developments, the process of India-China rapprochement stabilised firmly by the beginning of the nineties. The enhanced understanding as a result of high level political contacts between the two countries therefore, was a significant step forward in the bilateral relationship.

The South Asian dimension proved an important factor in India-China interaction. The conflicting perceptions of India and China towards South Asia generated tension and further aggravated the bilateral relationship. China, perceived itself as a part of the South Asian region because of geographical contiguity, historical linkage and common heredity with the Mongoloid group of people in India, Nepal and Bhutan. As a result, China considered it natural to get involved in the intra-regional affairs of South Asia. Further, China's interest in the region stemmed from the perception of its security status as well as regional and global roles.
India, on the other hand, had its own perception of its role and status in the region. It perceived China as an intrusive power in South Asia and believed that facts of geography, culture and ethnicity, reinforced by economic compulsions, tied the density of the South Asian nations much more with India than with China. As such, India viewed China's attempts to forge close relations with its South Asian neighbours as hostile acts.

Some significant trends in Chinese South Asian policy deserve mention here. Firstly, it was in a large measure India centred. Secondly, Chinese South Asian policy was pragmatic and devoid of any ideological considerations. Finally, Chinese policy towards the region had a global context. China's regional strategy became a function of its long-term preoccupation with a perceived Soviet threat as also relationship with United States, the other Super Power.

From 1963 onwards, China's regional strategy was characterised by comprehensive efforts to contain India. First, with Pakistan, India's foremost regional adversary, China established an extremely close relationship. In 1963, Pakistan and China signed a border agreement on the area which was illegally occupied by Pakistan in Kashmir. During the Indo-Pak war of 1965, China adopted a hostile attitude and militarily threatened India. During the Indo-Pak war of 1971, China supported Pakistan and indulged in anti-India propaganda on Bangladesh issue. China did not recognise
Bangladesh and vetoed its entry to the United Nations till Mujibur Rahman died. Secondly, China played an active role in the Himalayan region providing foreign aid, engaging in strategic road building and giving political support to the monarchy in its power struggle with Nepal Congress. Finally, by supplying military hardware and armaments to Pakistan, China helped in the arms build up in the region. China also questioned India's special relations with Nepal and Bhutan. India perceived China's role in South Asia as of a hostile power which acted to the determent of India's security interests.

However, by the mid 1980's, Chinese South Asian policy underwent a subtle but significant shift. Now, Chinese leaders began to acknowledge India's role as the leading South Asian power and realised that rather than weakening India, Chinese hostility helped to spur India's transformation into a major conventional military power. Further, Chinese leaders were learning to manage the ambiguous complexities of international relations without making unduly restrictive choices or becoming identified with one side or other side. In this context, Chinese leaders however, emphasised that the gradual amelioration of India-China relations would not take place at the expense of China's existing relationship in South Asia.

The Sino-Pak relationship survived and prospered through numerous changes in domestic regimes and amidst varying international circumstances. The close contacts were maintained at
all the higher levels among the political, military and economic establishments. The military intervention of Soviet Union in Afghanistan reinforced the relationship. By late eighties the strategic equation of South Asia slowly changed. By 1989, Soviets had withdrawn their army from Afghanistan and had normalised relationship with China. China, on its part, tried to maintain some kind of balance in its relationship with India and Pakistan. China urged both sides to solve all the outstanding issues including Kashmir in peaceful way.

Nevertheless, the military dimension of Sino-Pak relationship particularly the sale of missile and nuclear weapons technology was of direct concern to India. India continued to remain wary of the Sino-Pak entente and its impact on India’s role in South Asia.

China also sought to maintain close relationship with Nepal and other South Asian nations as a means of partially offsetting the enormous gravitational pull of India. China began to spoke in extremely assertive tones about regional controversies involving India. In seventies, China supported Nepal’s proposal of zone of peace. The Chinese advance in participation in projects closer to the Indian border began to cause serious concern in India. To develop relations with Bangladesh in February 1976, China ‘condemned India’s hegemonic action’ regarding Farakka barrage and sharing water of the Ganges. A perceived threat from India soon became the primary factor
in the convergence of interest between Bangladesh and China. With Bhutan, China's strategy was to pressurise it, to open direct negotiations on the disputed area north west of Tawang. China vigorously pursued its policy of weaning Bhutan away from India. Similarly, developing close bilateral relations with Sri Lanka was an important element of China's South Asian policy. Close Sino-Sri Lankan relationship had a strategic dimension considering the geo-strategic location of Sri Lanka.

However, by the late eighties, China had moved away from constant encouragement to Nepal and other South Asian nations to stand upto India and emphasised peaceful development of relations among all countries in this region. A concrete instance of this was, Nepal's differences with India over trade and transit treaty issues were widening in 1989, Nepal hoped to be bailed by China. But China took the position by making it clear to the Nepalese leadership its inability to help in the matter and advised it to seek a reasonable resolution of its problems with India. However, India was disturbed by Nepal's move to purchase arms from China.

Similarly, China which had earlier supported Bangladesh's stand on the Farakka issue later advised Bangladesh to solve this issue amicably and wound down the anti-Indian campaign. As regards, Sri Lanka's internal politics, Chinese leadership maintained a neutral position and advised the Lankan leadership to find a political
solution to the ethnic problem instead of a military one. China cautiously reported the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement on Tamil question. On Indian Peace Keeping Force Operation in Sri Lanka, the Chinese maintained a muted stance. In sum, China softened the anti-Indian edge in its policy and evinced less interest in fanning any conflictual situation in South Asia. The growth of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation received enthusiastic response from China.

India, however, continued to remain wary of China's role and influence in South Asia. From 1963 to 1991, the South Asian region saw substantial growth of Chinese influence. The network of relations which China built with other South Asian nations in general, but in particular with Pakistan, the nature of defence relations had security implications for India. India therefore perceived China as an intrusive power in the region. Chinese political influence, military linkages and arms transfer acted in a large measure as a hindrance in the process of India-China Rapprochement. Thus, it can be concluded that South Asian factor was an important input into India-China relationship.

The international political setting affected both India and China. The India-China cold war was enmeshed with the American-Soviet-Chinese triangular relations with in the context of the global cold war. In fact, in early fifties both India and China came closer to each other because of anti imperialist and Pan Asiatic sentiment. India followed
the policy of non alignment and China joined the communist camp of Russia against imperialist America. Form late fifties, in a parallel track to deterioration of India-China relations occurred the irreconcilable rift between Sino-Soviet relations. China attacked India at a time when both the superpowers were engaged in Cuban missile crisis. During the Sino-Indian war, both super powers helped India; US supplied arms to India in a bid to contain communism in Asia and Soviets criticised China and urged both the countries to solve the problem amicably. China could not reconcile to the fact the USSR did not support a fellow communist country against India. After the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962, relations between India and USSR became quite close. Consequently, China started attacking the erosion of India’s non-alignment policy and its joining the Soviet camp.

Following military clashes in Ussuri area in Sino-Soviet border in 1969, the Chinese tried to normalise their relationship with USA to pressurise the USSR. By forging a strategic relationship with the US, China hoped to effect a US-Pak-China alliance to counterbalance the Soviet-Indian alliance which was further strengthened by Treaty of Peace and Friendship in August 1971. The combined effect of these varied linkages was the freezing of South Asian regional politics in the global pattern. In 1979, US-China Rapprochement was further consolidated by the establishment of normal diplomatic relationship.
between two countries. US also was interested in India-China rapprochement as it perceived India was too close to Moscow.

India on its part, had always exercised independence of decision in its relations with China vis-a-vis USSR. One concrete instance was in 1969 when India did not react favourably to Brezhenev's Asian Collective Security Plan. It also sought to normalise its relations with China in the face of Soviet wariness. It cannot, however, be denied that India's own policies towards China were affected by the changing global alignments and its own relations with the Soviet Union and the United States.

From late eighties, following the USA-USSR rapprochement, and resumption of dialogue between China and USSR, the emphasis in international politics was on resumption of dialogues to resolve all outstanding issues between nations. As the pace of Sino-Soviet Rapprochement accelerated in late 1980s, Soviet Union also encouraged improvement in India-China relations. Hence, we find serious attempts towards India-China Rapprochement following Rajiv Gandhi's China visit in 1988.

Both countries were important developing countries which were engaged in modernising their economic development. Both India and China now emphasised on a world order which was equitable and where there was no international oligarchy, obviously the reference
was to USA. India and China had reason to be worried about the unilateralism of the USA in creating a Post Cold War New World Order. The two countries also exchanged views on a wide range of international economic issues, including special 301, GATT etc. Thus, it was apparent that on various international issues, India and China had commonality of interests which was bound to have a positive impact on the evolution of Sino-Indian ties.

It is clear from the foregoing that the combined effect of bilateral factors, regional imperatives and dynamics of global politics remained major inputs into India-China relationship during the years under study.