CHAPTER - III

INDIA - CHINA
China, unlike Pakistan is more influential in international politics and its impact on India's security is qualitatively different. The security dimension in India's China Policy is a function of the involvement and interests of the global forces and alignments of Great Powers on the one hand and the postures and policies of India and China towards each other, on the other hand.

Before the outbreak of Bangladesh War, India had shown considerable interest and was willing to normalize relations with China. Mrs. Gandhi, the then Prime Minister of India gave a concrete expression of India's readiness to break the ice in the Sino-Indian dispute, at a press conference on 2nd January, 1969 when referred to the possibility of resolving disputes with China.\(^{(1)}\)

While India's keenness to normalize relations was evident, China on its part was complacent because of its geo-political advantageous position vis-a-vis India. Till the famous smile and handshake of Mao Zedong with the Indian Charge d'Affairs

\(^{(1)}\) STATESMAN (New Delhi) 2 January, 1969, p.9; See also TIMES OF INDIA (New Delhi) 2 January, 1969, p.1.
in 1970, Chinese response to the Indian initiatives was always dual stanced. On the one hand, China maintained very tough stand over the claims of India for the border settlement and on the other hand, it evinced interest to have friendly relations with India on the basis of geo-political status-quo. (2)

The defeat of Pakistan, the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent nation and more importantly the decisive rise of India as a regionally dominant Power -- all put up China in a disadvantageous position in comparative terms. In fact, the entire China's policy towards Bangladesh, while having some Pakistani influence, intended to show the Chinese displeasure and opposition to Indian dominance on the sub-continental level; If Chinese policy towards Bangladesh is studied carefully, it reveals the frustration and disappointment of China over the changes in South Asia in the seventies. (3)

In the process, the earlier threat perceptions of India prevailing in the post-1962 phase were considerably cut down. India started enjoying a


clearly perceived notion of parity and equity with China in politico-military terms and even positionally. Unlike in the past, the Chinese capability and manoeuvrability to threaten India was now viewed with greater circumspection. (4)

The positions of both India and China changed by the end of 1972, exactly a decade later the eventful war of 1962. India emerged as a dominant power in the sub-continents. Further, India was no more the "weak, anaemic and pacific" nation of the sixties, but had gained considerable power and influence both politically and militarily. China also acquired a new role with greater nuclear capability and the imminent Sino-US rapprochement. China was also not the "radical revolutionary" that it used to be earlier. By the seventies, its policy was more mellowed and acquired pragmatic tones with a lowered ideological profile. (5)

II

India's relations with China in the period from 1972 to 1979 was a mixture of hostile co-existence


and efforts at normalisation of relations - all working in the backdrop of the Super Power's involvement in the region. Over all, the seventies marked the possibility of thaw in the strained Sino-Indian relations and the settlement of protracted border dispute between the two nations. The relationship continued to be burdened with inherent constraints and wide Gulf in terms of Political-security perceptions as demonstrated by the sudden calling off of the visit of A.B. Vajpayee, the then External Affairs Minister of India, to China in the wake of the Sino-Vietnam war of 1979.(6)

There are two distinct phases in India's relations in the period under study. In the first phase from the onset of seventies till the end of 1975, India had been taking initiatives, while China spurned these offers to normalize relations with India. The second phase begins with the year 1976 when the restoration of Ambassadorial exchange took place. From here, the long road for re-establishment of understanding and mutual confidence, trust and

cooperation was attempted to by both parties albeit on their own terms. By the end of 1979, while the normalization process was well on its way, the border issue, the central question in India-China relations still hung in the mid-air unresolved.\(^{(7)}\)

Till the middle of seventies, India consistently put forward offers to China for thawing relations which the latter did not accept for two basic reasons; (a) to demonstrate its resentment of Indo-Soviet ties, including the military cooperation between the two, (b) to prove to Pakistan that China valued its relationship with Pakistan more than that of with India by delaying the process of normalization of relations. Another more plausible factor that might have prompted China is that in the wake of the 1962 war and since then, it was in the advantageous position \textit{vis-a-vis} India as far as holding of territory is concerned and felt not to deprive itself of the geo-political advantages accruing therefrom.

\(^{(7)}\) For elaboration in this regard, see Krishna Prakash Gupta, "Conflict and Reconciliation with China", \textit{China Report}, Vol.6, No.6, Nov-Dec 1970, pp. 43-55.

But this Chinese rigidity did not last long because of various changes inside and outside South Asia. By 1976 itself, China responded to Indian moves. (9)

At this point, it is necessary to understand the Indian perceptions about China and the intensity of the Chinese threat. India's security perceptions in the period under study were very much alive to concerning the Chinese threats and its possible collusion with Pakistan and the United States to the detriment of India's vital interests. (10)

At the same time, India's policy towards China is underlined by the strong but implicit assumption that close and friendly relations with China would improve ostensibly the security environment of India and bestow gains in the long run. (11)

Despite all these assumptions, it is undeniable that the process of normalization of relations

(9) These developments are explained in the later pages of Chapter, hence not elaborated here.


between India and China was continued to remain susceptible to changes and influences of the outside Powers, particularly of the United States and Soviet Union.(12)

Some of the major factors that affected India's security perceptions during the period under study are: (a) Border dispute and India's perspectives; (b) The Chinese Military build-up and nuclear capability; (c) China's role in South Asia; (d) the Sino-Soviet relations; the Sino-Pak-American axis; Indo-Soviet ties and finally over all position in terms of security management in the context of India's relations with China from 1972 to 1979.

III

It is not an exaggeration to state that most of the Sino-Indian problems and rivalry are rooted in the intractable border dispute. In fact the resolution of this border dispute occupied the central place in the dynamics of India's relations with China.(13)

India clearly was on the losing side as far as border question is concerned in the wake of 1962 war

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with China not willing to give up its territorial gains of the 1962 war. India wanted to consolidate the gains of the 1971 war by quickening up the process of border settlement with China. India's stand on the border issue on the other hand is a legal-historical one and based on the traditional sources which have been constantly rejected by China. Consequently India is left with little room for political manoeuvrability vis-a-vis China or use any leverage in this regard. (14)

The Sino-Indian boundary dispute has mainly two geographical foci. The core issue is the Eastern Sector which extends from Bhutan to Burma, concerns the validity of the McMahon Line and China's claim over 77,000 sq. kms of area to the south of this border. In the west, sovereignty over 24,000 sq. kms encompassing North-Eastern Ladakh and the Aksai Chin issue is in question (15)


The actual position of both India and China on the possessions of the three major sectors is as follows:

In the Eastern Sector, India has the whole area except Thagla Ridge and Longjin. Western sector is the crucial area for both the nations; India claims the Aksai Chin Region, about 14,500 square miles. This Chinese possession exposes all the sensitive north-East areas. In the middle sector, situated along Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, India holds all the areas upto the line of actual control (LAC) decided in the wake of 1962 war. While, the settlement in the Eastern and middle sectors is considered easier and relatively smoother, the Western sector remains high in the priorities of both the nations because of the strategic importance of this area. (16)

China held that the contentious border issue should be addressed only when bilateral contacts in other fields - trade, cultural and scientific - had been expanded and broadened. In the Chinese perception such expanded community of interests arising

(16) ELKIN and Fredericks, ibid, pp. 1130-3; see also N. Murthaza Khan, "Wither Sino-Indian Relations; A Highlight over Border Dispute", INDIAN JOURNAL OF POLITICS (Aligarh) vol. 17, No.2, June 1983, pp. 72-80.
from the basis of widened contacts would create necessary and essential environment and considered as basic foundation for an agreement on boundary alignment. (17)

India argued on the other hand that the normalization of relations between the two should be preceded by the contemporaneous treatment of all Sino-Indian problems, particularly the vital demarcation of the common border. Thus, in other words, both India and China followed divergent approaches. China pressed for the need to freeze the border dispute and proceed with other avenues for cooperation which would automatically build up confidence for an eventual resolution of the border dispute in an easy manner. (18)

For India "the border problem is no longer just a question of Aksai Chin and the McMahon Line. It is now far more complex and includes the strategically important Karakoram highway, China's position on Kashmir, its non-recognition of the accession of

(17) AUKN and Fredericks, n. 15, p. 1132.

(18) Gargi Dutt, "India and China" in Bimal Prasad, ed., India's Foreign Policy: Studies in continuity and change (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 231-2
Sikkim to the Indian Union and its support for Naga and Mizo hostiles. For these reasons only India laid emphasis for a settlement of this border issue "with its wider ramifications like Karakoram highway, the Chinese support to Naga and Mizo insurgents, the Sikkim integration in the Indian Union and such other aspects which will yield the much needed thrust for and relieve the anxieties to the parties concerned", (19) for a proper setting of normal relations between India and China.

Thus the border issue and its settlement hinged on the extent of narrowing the differences in the approaches of each other and their ability to arrive at a level of mutual acceptance. There is no gainsaying the fact that the resolution of the long standing border dispute between India and China would appreciably lessen India's security burdens.

The major implications of the impending border resolution on India's security are: (a) the lowering of the augmentation of forces in the difficult terrain of Himalayan region which is both by logistical and financial considerations, very costly. A settlement of this border dispute would relieve the existing pressures and threat to India's security

(19) ibid.
interest in the Himalayas. (b) the development of harmonious relations with China would bestow a semblance of flexibility to the Indian army movements and dispositions. While normalization of relations does not eliminate India's long term security perceptions vis-a-vis China, nevertheless, it would reduce and alleviate the immediate apprehensions of India concerning the Chinese threat, (c) Finally this solution will also improve India's position vis-a-vis Pakistan by rupturing the rubrics of the Sino-American-Pak linkages if any. (20)

Thus the border settlement has vital bearings on Indian security structure at three levels: (a) domestic, (b) regional, and (c) global— all conducive to its security. However, the competition for leadership of third world countries, the economic rivalry in foreign trade and investment— between India and China, the linkages between China and Pakistan; the possible front of Sino-Pak-American axis, Sino-Indian divergent perceptions over various regional issues, the Indo-Soviet links— all do not allow the settlement process to be very smooth and easy going but rather make it as "delicate and

(20) For an account in this regard see Elkin and Fredericks, N. 15, pp. 1136-8.
vulnerable". (21)

Even though the border question is not the basic issue in Sino-Indian relations, it occupies a central place. It is rightly observed by a study "an understanding on boundary alignment constitutes a critical first step towards a Sino-Indian approach. Conversely, a collapse of border talks or a subsequent failure to make advances on other significant matters may well serve to deepen the pre-existing animosities" (21) between the two nations.

Concomitant to the border dispute, two other related issues that had security implications for India were: (a) the Sikkim integration into the Indian Union and (b) the North-East insurgency and the Chinese support to it.

It has been mentioned earlier that the Himalayan kingdoms of Nepal, Bhutan, erstwhile autonomous Tibet, Sikkim (upto 1975) - broadly constituted a vital component of India's security structure particularly in the context of India's

(21) ibid.

(21f) ELKIN AND Fredericks, N 15, P.1138.
relations with China. Indian policy in order to nurture the security structure and thereby preserve the position. India by and large succeeded in this regard, but its military debacle in the Sino-Indian war marked the crumbling of the Himalayan security structure of India.\(^{(22)}\)

China on its part assiduously tried to build up relations with Nepal and Bhutan to reduce their dependence on India in economic, political and military terms. China wanted to establish closer contacts particularly with Nepal which is strategically located.\(^{(23)}\) When Nepal King Birendra Shah declared the Nepalese proposal for a Zone of Peace, China very enthusiastically supported it. Added to this, India's reluctance to respond to Nepal's proposal, further encouraged China to exploit the opportunity to the chagrin of India.\(^{(24)}\)

\(^{(22)}\) For a study in the importance of Himalayan Kingdoms in the Indian security vis-a-vis China, see S.D. Muni, India and the Himalayan Kingdoms: Security Interests and Diplomacy, 1974-75 (SIS, JNU, New Delhi, January 1977).

\(^{(23)}\) For Sino-Nepalese relations, A. Hussain and A. Anwar, Conflict in Asia: Case Study of Nepal (New Delhi, 1979), pp. 42-61.

\(^{(24)}\) For an Indian perspective on Nepal's proposal for zone of peace, see, Kapileswar Labh "India and Nepal's Zone of Peace Proposal", Foreign Affairs Reports, vol. 27, no. 10, October, 1978, pp. 171-84.
Even with Bhutan, China followed the same strategy of raising the Indian bogey and alleged that India was hegemonic in nature and expanding itself. Whenever Bhutan wanted to gain some sort of autonomy from the traditional hold of India, China expressed its support and denounced Indian control of Bhutan. If possible, China would like to usurp Indian position and exercise more active influence on Bhutan. (25)

Here it may be mentioned that Sikkim's integration within the Indian Union as an integral area and a Constituent State is followed with India's commitment to safeguard its vital interests in the Himalayan kingdoms, particularly in the context of China's role there.

After the 1962 war, China's rejection of India's rights on Himalayan borders and its ability to intrude in these areas posed a problem to India. Further, the independence of Nepal, the isolation of Bhutan, the loss of Tibetan buffer, with the exception of Sikkim, India practically had no solid control in military terms on this region and China would

easily strike India at this delicate and vulnerable point. (26).

The integration of Sikkim in 1975 with 35th Constitutional amendment was an important step in strengthening India's security position in the Himalayan belt. The strategic implications of Sikkim integration with India were quite significant; with Sikkim as part of India, any future military threat to the region could be tackled in a more secure manner by India. More important by this integration, China's opportunities for meddling in India's sensitive border areas were limited in a clear way. (27)

China, as expected, reacted very vociferously to the Indian Action. When the Sikkim integration process began in 1973, China raised its objections as it had done before. For China, independent Sikkim was preferable to Sikkim as an integral part of India. Since the Sikkim's integration into the Indian Union,


China has continuously voiced its objections on this issue and castigated India for being the cause of destabilisation trends in an otherwise peaceful Himalayan region. By following the policy of non-recognition of the merger of Sikkim into the Indian Union, China obviously wanted to keep alive this issue much to India's discomfiture. (28)

One of the crucial challenges posed by China to India's security has been its continued support - both moral and material - of aiding and abetting the North-East insurgency in India.

From time to time, Chinese propaganda had voiced interest in spreading revolutionary fervour in the frontier areas like Nagaland, Mizoram and other North-East areas. China supplied military training and armed the rebels in this area by organising camps. This training and support, although not open, stalled the Indian efforts in resolving the complex accommodation process of hostile tribes, in this region. (29)

China clearly had designs on the vulnerable North-East areas of India. Besides the cultural and

(28) Seth, N. 14, pp. 82-83.
identify factors, China wanted to exploit the political disgruntlement in this region. By this China wanted to keep India tied up with its domestic problems. Further, China wanted to demonstrate its capability to cause inconvenience to India, for its protests over Tibetan incorporation into China. (30)

In 1967 China had started a new variety of attack on India, known as "loud-speaker war" in which it employed all along the border villages its massive official propaganda machinery to spread the "ideals of revolution". It is significant that this "loud speaker war" took place when the internal political situation in India was quite unstable with the rout of Congress party in the 1967 General Elections in many States, with severe border clashes at Nathu La and the expulsion of diplomats of each side. (31)

However, China could not continue this process of fishing in the troubled waters of North-East for a long time. As mentioned earlier, the integration of Sikkim as full fledged State in the


(31) For details, see Mohan Ram, Politics of Sino-Indian Confrontation (New Delhi, 1973) pp. 185-8; ASIAN RECORDER (New Delhi, 1967), col. 7659.
Indian Union by 35th Constitutional Amendment in 1975 coupled with the 1974 nuclear explosion strengthened India's over-all position as well as in the North-East area.

When A.B. Vajpayee, the then External Affairs Minister of India, visited China in February, 1979, (the visit was cut short by the Sino-Vietnam war of 1979) one of the issues that figured mainly in the official parleys was the moral and material support of China to North-East Insurgents. India got an assurance from China that this support would be no more extended. Vajpayee told the parliament on 21 February, 1979, "I was glad to learn from Chinese leaders that the support (of China to insurgents) which may have been given - the past instance was some time ago - was looked upon as a thing of past". (32)

It was clear that the Indian position vis-a-vis China's threat in the North-East region of India was made secure than ever before.

(32) ASIAN RECORDER, (New Delhi, 1979) cols. 14784-5.
Another factor having a bearing on India's security relations with China is the latter's military build-up and nuclear programmes during the period 1972-1979.

Immediately after the death of Chairman Mao Zedong, there was intense activity in China's Military build-up. It started acquiring new weapons, guided missiles, laying emphasis on the modernisation of Air Force and Navy. Even though majority of Chinese military modernisation programmes are oriented towards the Soviet threats, some impact on the neighbourhood - in the present context on India's geo-strategic environment - is inevitable. As a keen strategic analyst puts it "a general enhancement of China's military capabilities inevitably threatens the security of its Asian neighbours". (33) Another scholar in this context peritently observes "For India, the China's improvement in military potentiality is of immediate Concern. It should be well guessed that the China's military build-up is more related

to the ideas that a war may break out at some stage between the two communist giants, but it does not materialise, the same weapon may be used against India with whom China has not yet settled the border dispute. In this reference Chinese continued moral and material support to Pakistan and Indian rebels in Nagaland and Mizoram cannot be evaded easily."(34)

It is largely accepted that whatever the modernisation programmes of Chinese military, India has the ability to counter them in some areas like missile technologies. In tactical warfare, India might be ahead of China. But China's programme for this military build up is a long-range programme which would only come into force only in the later half of eighties or by the turn of nineties. So the military build-up of China was not perceived as so much security threat to India in the immediate context of the seventies except for long term projections. (35)


(35) See for this perspective Ravi Rikhye, "Modernisation of Chinese Forces: Implications for India Part II", Vikrant, vol. 9, no. 5, February, 1979, pp. 5-8; by the same author, Part II of the article Ibid., vol. 9, no. 6, March 1979, pp. 11-14.
If the positions of India and China are studied carefully in terms of GNP, population, armed forces, military expenditures and other related aspects (vide APPENDIX II), it is easily discernible that China has higher levels of expenditure as well as manpower. It consistently maintained its military expenditure and manpower commitments to army. Nevertheless, it should be noted that because of obsolescence of conventional forces of China, its military potential for intervention in India is limited at least in the 70s.

Right from 1964, it has come to be accepted in India that "the threat of China, ....... posed with the addition of atom bomb (was) more real than ever". (37) It is against this background that one has to see the dynamics of India's equation with China in the nuclear field in the seventies. By the turn of the seventies, two major developments took place; (a) the 1971 war partially upset Chinese calculations in terms of South Asian Power politics; (b) the 1974 nuclear explosion of India which completed the process of restoration of balance of positions between India and China.


(37) Peter Alvares, "Chinese Blast and India's Defence Problem", Janata (Bombay) vol. 20, no. 1 & 2, 26 January 1965, p. 17.
Both events were much to the chagrin of China. In an obvious reference to this test but without naming India, the Chinese paper People's Daily commented that "harbouring to become a sub-super power, a certain country though not a super power was engaged in arms expansion and war preparations and even resorts to nuclear black mail and threat to realise its expansionist designs."(38)

By and large, the two main features of India's nuclear rivalry with China centre around: (a) China's nuclear capability, its implications on India's security, (b) the widely believed and often confirmed reports of Sinō-Pak nuclear cooperation.

China has logically progressed from the 1964 nuclear test to other nuclear programmes and attained a considerable clout of nuclear power. Since 1962, till the end of 1979, China conducted altogether 25 nuclear tests. In fact China's progress from fusion nuclear device had been faster than any of the preceding hydrogen powers. Till 1975, China made rapid progress in the technology of nuclear war-heads. A theatre nuclear force is operational, capable of reaching large parts of the Soviet Union

and Asia. In 1976, a multi-stage ICBM, with a limited range of 3,000-3,500 miles have been deployed. This is in addition to the existing MRBMs with a range of 1,500-1,750 miles. (39) With all this, Indian perception of Chinese threats was quite alive all through the period of study. India despite its nuclear test in 1974, did not embark on the weapons programme not has it seemed bent on acquiring the nuclear capability, although it has kept open its nuclear option all through. Notably both India and China are not subject to the non-proliferation treaty's provisions.

India remained concerned about China's nuclear capability and the widening power gap between the two countries. As a scholar aptly points it "India is very much concerned about the effect of China's nuclear capability as instruments for strengthening, intervention and threats of escalation by Peking". (40)


Even though China has declared its nuclear policy is based on the three major pillars: (a) Development of nuclear weapons, entirely for defence purposes along with countering 'nuclear blackmail' by super powers, (b) A declaration of no-first use, and (c) a plea for international community for complete prohibition and through destruction of all nuclear weapons. (41) From Indian side, the Chinese capability and threat to use nuclear weapons was viewed with concern. This is because, China, by some Indian estimates, was suffering from the obsolescence and outdatedness of conventional weaponry and arms and there was "a distinct risk of the nuclear weapons used and the nuclear threshold getting dangerously lowered in conflicts in which China may get involved. Across ninety-five percent of its borders, China faces potential adversaries - Soviet Union, Vietnam and India and all these countries have conventional forces which are better armed than China's". (42)

Thus China's nuclear posture and capability to threaten India with a nuclear attack was not merely

(41) For a study on China's nuclear strategy, see S.K. Ghosh and Sreedhar, China's Nuclear and Political Strategy (New Delhi, 1975); Harry Gelber, "Nuclear Weapons and China's Policy", ADELPHI Papers, no.99, Summer 1973.

imaginary. But the limits of this threat have been well defined by international forces particularly the Indo-Soviet links.

V

One important element to be noted in the Indian security scenario in terms of the Chinese dimension is China's role in the South Asian affairs.

China is the most proximate great Power geo-politically and strategically in India's neighbourhood, possessing a recognised and accepted capability to threaten India's position and interests in the immediate context of time and space. For this reason only, most of the Indian security perceptions of Chinese threat are subjected to the variations, changes and fluctuations in China's impending role and its policies in South Asia. (43)

China's South Asian policy is mainly based on two considerations: (a) to prevent the Indian dominance in the sub-continent thereby preclude any Soviet influence in the region, (b) to spread authority or at least sphere of interest by nurturing alliance with all the South Asian countries and in particular

the strategically located and neighbouring countries of India.\(^{(44)}\) From 1972 onwards, Chinese antagonism against India grew further. As a keen scholar on Indian affairs rightly puts it, "India's emergence as a power in Asia, being internal to Asia would immediately restrict the scope of the Chinese sphere of influence; therefore in pure power terms, there is a fundamental conflict between India and China. Just for too long, both Moscow and Washington tried to pin down Peking to remain a regional power, Peking will do utmost to pin Indian down to remain as a sub-regional power.\(^{(45)}\)

China denounced Bangladesh as puppet regime set up by India and backed by Russians. Zhou Enlai even remarked that India's policy in South Asia would be leading to chaos and crisis in the region. He commented that "fall of Dhaka was the beginning of


troubles in the sub-continent.\(^{(46)}\)

During the period, 1971-1975, the Sino-Indian relationship continued to suffer from sustained Chinese aid and support to Pakistan. China exercised its veto, first time, in the U.N. to deny Bangladesh an entry into the U.N.. It was clearly illustrated by this that, for China, Pakistan was main link in South Asia.

The Chinese dimension in South Asia affecting India's security can be illustrated by the construction of Karakoram high-way.

Even though Karakoram high-way was officially inaugurated only by 1978, the impending fall-outs on India's geo-strategic position were too vital and sensitive to be not taken note of. In fact the activities of construction on the Karakoram high-way mainly picked up momentum after 1971, not by coincidence but with the realised views of China and Pakistan about the growing strength and stature of India by its victory in the 1971 war with India.\(^{(47)}\)

The road construction on the Karakoram was part of China's grand strategy in the Himalayan

\(^{(46)}\) Choudhury, N.5, p.256.

belt in countervailing the Indian hold on the Himalayas. This construction of highway not only strengthened Sino-Pakistan links but also ensured Chinese dominant position in the region. Both propositions adversely affected the Indian security considerations. (48)

The basic implications of this network of road system, the prominent one being the Karakoram Highway (old Silk Route), on the Indian security can be summed up in the following manner. As a noted author observes, in fact that, at points, this road overlooks the Srinagar-Leh road, thus making it vulnerable to artillery attack. In such an eventuality, the north-west of India might remain cut off in the absence of alternative road (for India; in future any attempt by India to liberate Lhasa-Chin (through which the life lines of China to western Tibet pass), might be obstructed. Moreover the strategic advantage, India had secured from Pakistan the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Kashmir. After the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 stands negated.

because the Karakoram highway overlooks the Indian posts on the Line of Actual Control which are within the range of artillery".(49) Further this highway has a vital bearing on the question of settlement of Kashmir. Following the 1963 border agreement between China and Pakistan, China has become a vital factor in the context of Kashmir dispute.

As an analyst observes pertinently, "This network of roads is to ensure physical presence of China to facilitate military intervention when all the diplomatic alternatives, fail to keep the stalemate over Kashmir alive". (50)

India clearly grasped these implications and braced itself for countering Chinese tactics in this regard. In 1969 itself, the then External Affairs Minister, Dinesh Singh had observed in the Lok Sabha that the Karakoram road "will help to extend the Chinese road network in the Tibet-Sinkiang area into northern Kashmir. It will give easier access to Chinese troops from the areas, under the illegal occupation of China in North-East Kashmir and from Tibet, into Gilgit area in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which lies to the north of cease-fire line.

(49) Gurnam Singh, N.47, p.22.

(50) ibid, p.21.
The military significance of the road is therefore, self-evident." (51) (emphasis added)

Thus Indian stance on the implications of Chinese highway system are based on two elements: (1) the illegality and illegitimate nature of the activity as it is carried on a disputed areas, and (2) the fall-out on the security environment of India particularly in the context of Kashmir.

This perception did not change even when Janata Government came into power in 1977. Despite, seemingly friendly stance towards China, Atal Behari Vajpayee reiterated that "apart from the illegality of the construction of this highway, this development also has serious strategic implications for the region". (52)

On balance, if the South Asian context determines the real dynamics of India-China security equation, South Asian context is further defined by the Sino-Pakistan relations and India's reactions thereto. As an analyst has pointed out that "the cornerstone of the new Chinese posture in South Asia is a regional encirclement of India and a policy of

support and friendship for Pakistan". (53)

From Indian point of view, the relations of China with South Asian countries per se were not a cause for concern, but "when these (China's bilateral relations with India's neighbours) are conceived and nurtured in the context of their problems with India, Beijing increasingly assume the role of their mentor and protector against a 'hostile' India". (54) This Chinese assumption of interventionary role in South Asian affairs was a thorn in India's security flesh.

VI

In power terms, the relations between/among nations in international politics cannot be merely bilateral. This is more so since the multi-polarity as a phenomenon has emerged in international politics. India in its relations with China has also to take into account the global forces, the involvement of Pakistan and the United States and the Soviet Union in this context.

As a scholar rightly puts it that "the basic

(54) Seth, N. 14, p. 84.
issues between New Delhi and Beijing have been and are bilateral in nature, but their mutual perceptions are clouded and coloured by the prevailing international and strategic environment. (55)

The first such dimension is the Sino-Soviet relationship and its impact on the Indian security considerations. Sino-Soviet relations have a vital bearing on India's security policy.

By and large, India achieved good pay offs in the wake of Sino-Soviet rift up in sixties. Even in the 1971 war, by playing the "Soviet card" in the form of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971, India closed any gaps for possible Peking's intervention. Despite the fact that the Soviet involvement was not so much as it had been generally projected, nevertheless the understanding reached between India and the Soviet Union played a very crucial role in containing China and blunting its policy towards the Indo-Pak war of 1971. One of the plausible explanations for, why China did not intervene materially on the side of Pakistan in the 1971 war, could be the Soviet backing to India and the fall-out effects of Sino-Soviet differences.

(55) ibid., p.66.
In other words, the Sino-Soviet disputes has come to be increasingly relevant to Indian security considerations. (56)

At the time of Indo-Pak war, the Soviet mobilisation of forces was very intense on the Chinese borders and the number of Soviet divisions on China's border from 15 in 1968 went up to 44 by the end of 1971 which can hardly be termed as coincidental. (57)

The Sino-Soviet dispute clearly checked China's expansion in South Asia and by consequence India's security position became much flexible and manageable vis-a-vis China compared to a situation wherein China and the Soviet Union would be on one side. Given the present military balance of powers, "China would think twice about encouraging a war in the sub-continent and thereby incurring the risk of an intensified Soviet threat, particularly after the signing of Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971". (58)


But the latter half of seventies again saw some alterations in the Chinese perception of India-Soviet links. China by this time realised that the criticism and attack on the Indo-Soviet links was ultimately counterproductive where India firmly positions itself into Soviet bloc by its criticism of the links. In other words, the Chinese criticism and its rigid stand would mean driving India further away from China, which the Soviet Union might utilise for further consolidation of its position. When Janata party came into power in 1977, the Indo-Soviet ties were expected to be diluted and China wanted to capitalize on the changes within India. As it came to pass, the Janata Government did not deviate much from the traditional path of Indo-Soviet friendship. Despite Janata Party's declaration of "genuine non-alignment" and restoration of balance in the foreign policy, it was soon realised that there are inherent constraints in the sino-Indian relations as much as there was a commonality of objectives between India and the Soviet Union. This was made clear by A.B. Vajpayee, the then External Affairs Minister of India when he observed in the luncheon meeting in the honour of Cromkyo's visit, "The bonds of friendship between our two countries are strong enough to survive the demands of divergent
systems, the fate of individuals of the fortunes of a political party". (59)

In this context, it is necessary to comprehend the importance of the Indo-Soviet ties in serving the needs and demands of India's security. It is notable that the Indo-Soviet have evolved into a mutually beneficial relationship over a period of time. For India, the ties with the Soviet Union came in handy in many a hour of need. For instance the 1971 Indo-Soviet treaty and the Soviet compliance to shield India's interests against any external encroachment within the South Asian region - reflected the potentiality of Indo-Soviet ties. India, from time to time, could use the Soviet support against any unfavourable collusion, internorms of international power configurations. Particularly in the seventies, with the emergence of 'Sino-American-Pak' axis, India increasingly felt the importance of the strong relationship between itself and the Soviet Union. (60)


In other words, if the relations of either
India and China with the Soviet Union acquire some
changes, there would be corresponding impact on
the Sino-Indian relations. (61)

Another element that shapes the Indian
Security perceptions is the Sino-Pak-American
relationship. In fact the most important develop-
ment during the period under study which had an
important bearing on the Sino-Indian relations was
the growth of politico-strategic harmony among China
the United States and Pakistan since the seventies.
What is significant in this regard is that till the
seventies one of the three acted in concert with one
of the remaining two, while in the seventies all the
three started acting in unison with one another,
following the rapprochement between the United States
and China. (62)

The Sino-U.S. rapprochement had obvious impact
on India's position and security. The major impli-
cations of the Sino-U.S. entente, for India could be

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(61)  M.L. Sondhi, "Peace and Diplomacy between India
and China", Pacific Community, vol. 7, no.1,
October 1976, pp.145-6. See also, David E.
Albright, "The Sino-Soviet Conflict and the
Balance of Power in Asia", Ibid., vol.8, no.2,
January 1977, pp. 219-22.

(62)  For some perspectives on Sino-American thawing,
see JD Sethi,"The Big Triangle and India's Options"
19-25; Sisir Gupta, "Sino-U.S. Detente", India
Quarterly, vol.27, no.3, July-September 1971, vol.7
no.4, July-August, 1971, pp.16-18; Swadesh Rana,
"South Asia in the U.S. Strategic Calculations",
Strategic Analysis, vol. 2, no.8, November 1978,
pp. 200-2.
listed in the following manner:
(a) the common support of the USA and China to Pakistan and their efforts to strengthen it as "the sustenance of Pakistan helps the achievement of goal of Sino-U.S. detente", (b) secondly, the growth in the stature and the emergence of India as a dominant power in South Asia coupled with Indo-Soviet links like Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971 reflected a responsive reaction in the build-up of Sino-American relations. Therefore, both China and the USA wanted India to be pinned down to the regional level. (c) Finally Pakistan gained considerably by the support derived from Sino-American rapprochement, thus posing an insidious challenge to India.(63)

The Sino-U.S. cooperation included also the possibility of military and technological cooperation between the two which was bound to undermine the Indian position and bargaining capability vis-a-vis China in bilateral relations. Even though India's perceptions about the Sino-American military cooperation seemed to be exaggerated, these were quite understandable given the trend of Convergence

of Sino-American interests and policy objectives affecting the Indian interests. (64) Here it is interesting to observe the parallel between the post-1962 and post-1971 positions. While it was China which in the post-1962 situation faced the Indo-American front, in the post-1971 scenario, the position got reversed, with India in the place of China. (65)

Besides, the improved Sino-American relations restricted India's foreign policy options and Choices as it was compelled to seek the Soviet support in increasing terms. As an analyst rightly commented, "The importance of China in American global strategy as well as the past American preference for China's ally Pakistan, in its disputes with India, implied that India would have to depend entirely on the credibility of Soviet deterrence against China during future courses in

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(64) For the impact of the convergence of Sino-American interests on India's position, see Baldev Raj Nayar, "Regional Power in a Multi-Polar World", in J.W. Mellor, ed., India: A Rising Middle Power (Boulder, Colorado, 1975), pp. 160-76.

South Asia". (66)

This new development made India diffident about possible Chinese threats. "The Psychological costs" of Indian "deterrence" against China became too steep by the Sino-American reconciliation. (67)

To sum up, the normalization process between India and China was affected considerably by the dynamics of the relationship among China, Pakistan and the USA. In other words, the developments outside the bilateral relations altered the dynamics of bilateral relations between India and China.

VII

It is widely held that the border problem holds the key to most of problems persisting in India's relations with China. Therefore, once the border problem was resolved, it is expected that there would be automatic improvement in Sino-Indian relations. Further, it is also argued that this would considerably enhance India's security and change the surrounding geo-strategic environment to its favour. (68)

(66) ibid.


(68) For this view, see Narendra Singh, "Border Deal with China: Essential for India's Security", Times of India (New Delhi) 4 November 1986, p. 8; see also Manoranjan Mohanty, "India-China Relations: A Positive Frame", India Quarterly, vol.41, no.41 no.1, January-March 1985, pp.7-12.
While it is reasonable to say that the resolution of border problem would improve India's security, it is doubtful how far, there can be improvement in Sino-Indian relations? This is so because, the Chinese diplomacy of normalisation was not related and responsive to Indian moves or offers but rather conditioned and defined by the forces external to India and China.

As observed by a strategic analyst, it should not be taken that "Sino-Indian dispute is no more than a border quarrel. A certain degree of rivalry is almost inherent in the relationship between the two most populous nations, each having different political and economic systems." (69)

Besides these factors, it should also be noted that the shadows and legacy of 1962 war haunted the threat perceptions of India about China during the period under study. Even though the 1971 war lessened the intensity of these perceptions, the basic threat perceptions \( \text{vis-a-vis} \) continued to be unchanged. Again the Sino-Vietnamese war of 1979

reconfirmed that India could ill afford to take China lightly, in terms security considerations. The sudden call off of India's External Affairs Minister's tour of 1979 to China indicated that India had not forgotten the debacle of 1962. (70)