India's Relationship with China and Taiwan

Rich Girven

Director/Senior International Defense Research Analyst Cyber and Intelligence Policy Center

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Abstract

This paper suggests that over the course of their shared relationship, India's thinking about China as the central political force in Asia and a nation with which to tread lightly, is slowly changing to thinking about China as a more equal peer competitor than in the past, a nation that India should and can negotiate with, disagree with, and if necessary, push back against with force. Taiwan provides India some real and potential opportunities for investment, trade, research and development, and technology enhancements, but it serves an equal if not more valuable function to India as a growing reminder to Beijing that India refuses to be encircled or bullied.

Keywords: India, Taiwan, China, Relationship

印度與中國和台灣的關係

Rich Girven

主任暨資深國際防衛研究分析師

蘭德公司網路與情報政策中心

摘 要

本文主張,隨著兩國共同關係的發展,印度對於中國的看法出現轉 變。過往將中國視為亞洲核心政治力量並需小心應對的思維,緩慢地朝 向視中國為更平等的競爭對手,一個印度需要也可以與之談判、與之產 生歧見,甚至在必要時使用武力遏止的國家。台灣在投資、貿易、研發 與科技進步等方面,提供印度現實與潛在的機會。然而對印度而言,台 灣發揮了一個同等重要一如果不是更重要一的功能:台灣的存在提醒北 京,印度拒絕被中國包圍或霸凌。

關鍵詞:印度、台灣、中國、關係

I. Introduction

While the relationship between India and Taiwan traces back to a time before Indian Independence, India's relationship with Taiwan has been, since 1950, philosophically, diplomatically, and economically hyphenated with that of China.¹ New Delhi's adherence to a One China Policy endured through decades of disagreement and dispute with Beijing including territorial disagreements, a Chinese invasion and humiliating defeat of the Indian Army in which India ceded territory, and Chinese support of Pakistan during two wars with India and beyond. Throughout these tumultuous decades India's contact with Taipei remained negligible; then in 1995, under the guidance of then Indian Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, the relationship began to slowly and quietly change.

This paper examines the India-China relationship and the development of the Delhi-Taipei relationship over time and explores how Taiwan's relationship with India may have become a lever, whether by Indian design or not, that Delhi can use to influence Beijing. It suggests that over the course of their shared relationship India's thinking about China as the central political force in Asia and a nation with which to tread lightly, is slowly changing to thinking about China as a more equal peer competitor than in the past, a nation that India should and can negotiate with, disagree with, and if necessary, push back against with force. Taiwan provides India some real and potential opportunities for investment, trade, research and development, and technology enhancements, but it serves an equal if not more valuable function to India as a growing reminder to Beijing that India refuses to be encircled or bullied.

¹ Chiang Kai-Shek visited India in 1942 and was said to have a good relationship with Jawalarhal Nehru. He sent an Ambassador to visit India in 1949, the first and only visit before India accorded diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China.

India may be finally coming to grips with China's increasing influence in the Indian ocean, it's expansionist One Belt One Road policy, its ongoing support for rival Pakistan, and its thwarting of Indian ambitions on the global stage. The timing and changing nature of India's relationship with Taiwan over the past several years and very recent developments in the relationship between India and China suggest that not only is India seeing itself more as a peer to China, but China may be more willing to accept India as a "peer." China's sudden willingness to "reset" the relationship with India and partner against growing protectionist tendencies in the West might signal a real improvement in China-India relations, or it may just be a way for China to balance against growing negative opinion about China in the West at a time when positive opinions about India are on the rise.

II. India-Taiwan Today

Once India accorded diplomatic recognition to the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950, any thoughts in either India or Taiwan about having even an informal relationship most likely disappeared in the face of larger Cold War realities. Taiwan aligned with the U.S. led bloc and India held firmly to a non-aligned policy. Where Taiwan is concerned, India maintained a One-China policy that would be the status quo for four and a half decades.

Today, both the Indian-run India-Taipei Association (ITA) in Taipei and the two Taiwanese-run Taipei Economic and Cultural Center (TECC) offices in India provide routine consular services such as passport and visa issuance, as well as attestation services and citizen assistance (birth certificate replacements, pensioner benefits, etc.). They have commercial representatives that provide trade assistance, support industry associations and promote industry cooperation in both countries, and cultural and educational representatives that promote travel and culture, provide travel assistance and advice, and promote educational programs, scholarship assistance, and joint research, especially in the areas of science and technology. In sum, both ITA and TECC serve as de facto embassies in the absence of formal diplomatic relations.

Interestingly, whereas ITA first went to Taipei as a quasi-diplomatic organization staffed by former diplomats, today, the email addresses of all ITA offices in Taipei end in @mea.gov.in, making it clear that ITA is the official, if not formal Indian diplomatic representation of the Ministry of External Affairs in Taiwan. Similarly, the TECC website bears the seal and contact information of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

This warming and near normalization of relations between New Delhi and Taipei didn't happen overnight. Long, slow, and sometimes quiet progress in the relationship has occurred over the past twenty-three years with only sporadic and relatively limited protests from the PRC. Understanding India's historical relationship with China is fundamental to examining the significance of India's willingness to bend it's "One China Policy" for a pragmatic relationship with Taiwan.

III. Historic Relations Between India and China

Disagreements between India and China date back to the very beginning of their diplomatic relationship. The first five years of India-China relations included the Chinese invasion and Indian departure from Tibet and abrogation of the 1914 Simla Accord in favor of the Panchsheel agreement in which the two nations pledged:²

- •Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty,
- •Mutual non-aggression,

² Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Panchsheel Agreement," June 2004, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, http://www.mea.gov.in/Uploads/ PublicationDocs/191_panchsheel.pdf.

•Mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs,

•Equality and mutual benefit,

•Peaceful co-existence.

Within a year of the Panchsheel agreement, Delhi formally objected to the depiction of a portion of India's northern frontier on the official map of China, stating that it was an infringement of the Panchsheel. In 1958 India officially objected to China's claims over a big chunk of Northern Assam and the Northeast Frontier Agency (NEFA, now the Union Territory of Arunchal Pradesh) and in 1959, when the Dalai Lama escaped from Lhasa to India, the Indian decision to grant him asylum soured relations with Beijing even further.

The next few years saw repeated claims by China, objections by India and several failed attempts at negotiating solutions to address boundary disputes. In 1961, China moved to occupy 12,000 square miles of the western sector of the China-India border, and in 1962 Chinese troops crossed the Indian border in both the western and Eastern sector, capturing significant territory in both Ladakh and present-day Arunachal Pradesh. Days later, China unilaterally announced its withdrawal to the so-called line of actual control (LAC), which currently delineates the border between the two nations.

After the war, relations between India and China continued to trend downwards as Beijing grew closer to Islamabad, supported Pakistan through two wars fought against India in 1965 and 1971 and became Pakistan's largest source of military hardware. For more than 65 years, China provided nearly 40 percent of Pakistan's military arms and equipment, and has been its most consistent source of hardware.³ In 1972, China denounced India as a tool of the Soviet Union at the United Nations and suggested that India, in concluding "an aggressive military alliance" with the Soviet Union, had "stripped off its own cloak of non-alliance."⁴

In 1976, China and India restored diplomatic relations and returned to appointing and posting ambassadors. Three years later, Indian Minister of External Affairs Atal Bihari Vajpayee embarked on a visit to Beijing that began the process of fully normalizing relations and by 1984 the two nations agreed to sign a trade agreement.

When Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China to meet with Deng Xiaoping in 1988, the two leaders agreed that while border disagreements remained the single biggest flash point in their relations, they would not let the dispute prevent cooperation on other issues. They agreed to make efforts to improve and develop their bilateral relations, to establish joint working groups on border issues, and joint committees on economics and trade and science and technology. The Embassy of the People's Republic of China in India would later refer to it as a "new stage of development."⁵

IV. India's Post-Cold War Relationships with Taiwan and China

As the Cold War ended, and India's reliance on the former Soviet

³ Jonah Blank, "Thank you For Being a Friend: Pakistan and China's Almost Alliance," *Foreign Affairs*, October 15, 2015, Council on Foreign Relations, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-10-15/thank-you-being-friend.

⁴ Robert Alden, "China's First U.N. Veto Bars Bangladesh," *New York Times*, August 26, 1972, https://www.nytimes.com/1972/08/26/archives/chinas-first-un-veto-bars-bangladesh-soviet-uni on-and-india-are.html.

⁵ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in India, "The Relations Between China and India," February 2, 2002, Embassy of the People's Republic of China in India, http://in.china-embassy.org/eng/sgxw/zygx/t61475.htm.

Union as patron and military supplier began to wane, the government of India began to reassess its non-aligned status, and its overall place in the world order. India's "Look East" policy, conceived and enacted in 1991 during the government of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao, sought to develop relations, increase economic integration and forge security relationships with nations in Southeast Asia.

Four years later, the Indian government under Narasimha Rao and the Taiwanese government under President Lee Teng-hui outlined the beginnings of an unofficial relationship with the establishment of the ITA in Taipei and the TECC in New Delhi. Both New Delhi and Taipei were very careful at first in the management of their bilateral relations. Ambassador Vinod Khanna, the first Director of ITA was required by the Indian government to focus on establishing economic relations with Taipei and to not accord Taiwan any form or symbol of sovereignty.⁶

TECC was allowed to appoint career diplomats and to establish its first office in the diplomatic enclave in Delhi, but the Indian Ministry of External Affairs established rules prohibiting Ministerial-level visits from Taipei and the controlling the levels of contacts allowed.⁷ In 1999, then Bharatiya Janata Parishad (BJP) General Secretary Narendra Modi visited Taiwan, fifteen years before he would become Indian Prime Minister and set India on course for greater relations with Taiwan.

In 2002, the directors of ITA and TECC, seeking to "create favourable conditions for greater economic cooperation and investments on the basis of

⁶ Vinod C. Khanna, "The India-Taipei Association: A Mission Extraordinaire," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, Vol. 5, No. 2, April-June 2010, pp. 240-251, Association of Indian Diplomats, http://www.associationdiplomats.org/Publications/ifaj/Vol5/5.2/ 5.2-OralHistory-VCKhanna.pdf.

⁷ B.R. Deepak and D. P. Tripathi, eds., *India and Taiwan: From Benign Neglect to Pragmatism* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2016).

the principles of equality and mutual benefit" signed an agreement on promotion and protection of investments.⁸ This agreement encouraged the investors of one territory to invest in the other, outlined rules for conflict disputes and arbitration, and provided guarantees of fair and equal treatment on investors that would be no less favorable than any other third-party investor.

In 2003, airlines began direct flights between New Delhi and Taipei and Taiwan began offering scholarships to Indian students to study Mandarin in Taiwan. Also in 2004, former Indian Defence Minister George Fernandes travelled to Taipei to give a keynote address at the "India-Japan-Taiwan Trialogue: Prospects for Democratic Cooperation," an event held by the Taiwan Thinktank to promote "awareness of potential areas of tripartite cooperation between India, Japan and Taiwan in the areas of economic growth and trade, high-tech industry, democratic development as well as other inter-regional issues of vital interest to each country."⁹ Fernandes was the first Indian ministerial-level official to risk Beijing's wrath to meet with officials from the Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in New Delhi.

It was also Fernandes, after the 1998 Indian nuclear tests, who also became the first Indian Defence Minister to break a longstanding taboo and declare publicly that China, and not Pakistan was "India's potential threat number one."¹⁰ His remarks against China were criticized at the time both

⁸ UNCTAD, "Agreement between The India Taipei Association in Taipei and The Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in New Delhi on The Promotion and Protection of Investments," 2002, Investment Policy Hub, UNCTAD Division on Investment and Enterprise, https://investmentpolicy.unctad.org/international-investment-agreements/ treaty-files/1606/download.

⁹ Melody Chen, "Former Indian Minister to Attend Meet," *Taipei Times*, November 11, 2004, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2004/11/11/2003210581.

¹⁰ John F. Burns, "India's New Defense Chief Sees Chinese Military Threat," New York Times, May 5, 1998, https://www.nytimes.com/1998/05/05/world/

in India and in China, but his assertions that India should awaken to the fact that Chinese military activities and alliances had begun to "encircle" India, are now being recognized by some South Asia watchers as showing great foresight.

In 2005 and 2006 New Delhi hosted several delegations of Taiwanese legislators and party officials for meetings with their counterparts in India and in 2006 Taipei established the Taiwan-India Cooperation Council (TICC), a private organization with participation from businesses, the government and academics, designed to "act as a bridge to promote economic exchanges and broader cooperation on bilateral interests between Taiwan and India."¹¹

The following year, in June of 2007, the former head of Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) party and then KMT presidential candidate Ma Ying-jeou made an unofficial visit to India to give an address at the Indian Council on World Affairs.¹³ Prior to the visit, China allegedly told India it had no issues or concerns with Ma's trip, as long as he did not display a Taiwanese flag on his car or show any kind of symbol or insignia associated with the pro-independent Taiwan movement.¹⁴ Some Indian media outlets at the time viewed Ma's visit as timely, considering recent moves by China to assert itself more firmly regarding claims it had on India's northeastern

india-s-new-defense-chief-sees-chinese-military-threat.html.

¹¹ Jeff M. Smith, "Where is India on the One China Policy?" *The Diplomat*, March 6, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/03/where-is-india-on-the-one-china-policy.

¹² Yun-Ping Chang, "Council Established to Boost Taiwan-India Exchanges," *Taipei Times*, February 12, 2006, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2006/02/12/ 2003292656.

¹³ "Ma Ying-Jeou Visiting India, Singapore," *Taipei Times*, June 13, 2007, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/taiwan/archives/2007/06/13/2003365000.

¹⁴ "No Issues with Visiting Taiwanese Leader," *Hindustan Times*, June 8, 2007, https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/no-issues-with-visiting-taiwanese-leader/story-O 8Q2CA1fsWkBUCppoWdVxI.html.

state of Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁵

Also in 2007, the ITA and the TECC signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on behalf of India's Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Ministry of Science and Technology and Taiwan's National Science Council.¹⁶ Under the MOU, the DST and the NSC (now the Ministry of Science and Technology - MOST) hold annual meetings alternately in New Delhi and Taipei, which are attended by four to five representatives from each side. The annual meetings serve as an exchange of ideas and an opportunity to invite research proposals from both sides.

In August of 2010, the Chinese government refused to issue a visa to the Commander of the Indian Army's Northern Command, Lieutenant-General B.S. Jaswal, on the grounds that he commanded forces in Jammu and Kashmir, the borders of which are disputed territories between Indian and China. Known widely in India as "the visa incident," New Delhi responded by refusing entry to two Chinese military officers who were scheduled to attend a defense related course in India, and another Chinese Colonel who was to deliver a speech at an Indian Army institute.¹⁷ India also escalated by terminating bilateral military exchanges between Delhi and Beijing for nearly 10 months.¹⁸

Since the 2010 visa incident, the pace of India's engagements with

¹⁵ Just prior to the visit of Ma, China had refused a visit to an Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer of Arunachal Pradesh, as China claimed that residents of Arunachal Pradesh are Chinese Nationals. This would be a precursor to the 2010 "visa incident."

¹⁶ "Sumit Kumar, Improving Taiwan-India Relations," *Taipei Times*, February 23, 2018, http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2018/02/23/2003688063.

 ¹⁷ John Cherian, "A Visa Row," *Frontline*, Vol. 27, Issue 19, September 11-24, 2010, Frontline, http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2719/stories/20100924271911900.htm.

¹⁸ G.V.C. Naidu and Mumin Chen, *India and China in the Emerging Dynamics of East Asia* (New Delhi: Springer, 2015).

Taiwan appears to have accelerated, including, ironically, an agreement in 2010 to ease visa rules and requirements for each other's citizens. Taiwan grants visa-free entry to Indians who hold valid visas or permanent residence in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Japan, Schengen Convention countries, and Australia or New Zealand. Taipei and Delhi signed a deal granting degree recognition of the others' higher education institutions in 2010 and in December of that same year, Taiwan hosted former Indian President APJ Abdul Kalam, to attend the 30th anniversary of the World Poet Conference in Taipei. This was the first time that a former head of state of the Republic of India visited Taiwan since the cessation of diplomatic relations in 1949.¹⁹

The relationship in 2011 was characterized by a series of high-level visits to India by Taiwanese Ministers. The Education Minister, Planning and Development Minister, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, as well as the Deputy Defense Minister and Vice Minister of Economic Affairs all visited. Interestingly, the current Taiwanese President, Tsai Ing-wen visited Delhi in 2011 as well, while she was serving as Chairperson of the Taiwan Democratic Progressive Party. India also consented in 2011 to allow Taiwan to open a second Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, located in Chennai, and Taipei and Delhi signed a Cultural Cooperation Agreement, a Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, and a Customs Agreement. New Delhi, through the Ministry of External Affairs signaled that a potential Free Trade Agreement was being explored.

With Narendra Modi's election to Prime Minister in 2014, many Taiwan analysts expected a swift and increasingly more robust diplomatic agenda with Taiwan. Not only had Modi visited Taiwan in 1999, but he had hosted the largest-ever Taiwanese business delegation in India when he was

¹⁹ "World Congress of Poets Set for Taiwan," *Taiwan Today*, December 1, 2010, https://taiwantoday.tw/news.php?unit=10&post=17344.

serving as the Chief Minister of Gujarat. Plus, India-China relations were at a low point because the Indian and Chinese militaries were still squaring off against each other in Ladakh, after Chinese troops moved, according to India, 19 kilometers across the Line of Actual Control and into India.²⁰

Despite the state of their relations, China welcomed Modi's election and sent a warm congratulatory note. Modi was a self-proclaimed admirer of China; "China and its people have a special place in my heart," he said on his fourth visit to the country in 2011, while serving as Chief Minister of Gujarat. If any Indian official had the knowledge and experience required to transform the India-Taiwan relationship while balancing and improving the India-China relationship, it was Modi.

Within days of taking office Modi invited Chinese President Xi Jinping to India, but Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh later that month angered the Chinese. Beijing lodged a strong protest with India over the Prime Minister's visit to Arunachal Pradesh and expressed its "diametrical opposition" to the trip which it suggested was not conducive for resolving the border dispute.²¹ Nevertheless, Xi Jinping visited India in September, at a time when Indian and Chinese forces were still facing-off against each other in Ladakh.

In November, Xi invited Modi to the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Beijing, but Modi declined and went instead to the East Asia Summit in Myanmar, as part of a three-country trip including Australia and Fiji. In Myanmar, Modi announced that his government was moving "with a great sense of priority and speed" to turn

²⁰ A.R., "India and China Square Off," *The Economist*, April 30, 2013, https://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2013/04/india-and-china-square.

²¹ "China protests PM Narendra Modi's visit to Arunachal Pradesh," *First Post*, February 20, 2015, https://www.firstpost.com/world/china-protests-pm-narendra-modis-visit-arunachal-pradesh-2112461.html.

India's Look East Policy into an Act East Policy.²² A year after Modi was elected, India and Taiwan began to move their bilateral relationship forward again, in the form of official visits at the Vice-ministerial level.²³ India's principal goals in "Act East" still appeared to be focused on ASEAN nations, but Delhi began to pay more attention to its relationship with Taiwan.

In January of 2016, Tsai Ing-wen was elected Taiwan's president and in August, unveiled her "New Southbound Policy" (NSP). The policy "aims to redefine Taiwan's important role in Asia's development, identify a new direction and a new driving force for a new stage of economic development, and create future value" by making it clear to the international community, the 10 targeted nations of ASEAN, six South Asia nations as well as Australia and New Zealand, that Taiwan has "bona fide intentions to push forward with cooperation projects and engage in talks and dialogue."²⁴

President Tsai Ing-wen's speech made it clear that Taiwan hopes to "start up wide-ranging negotiation and dialogue with the nations of ASEAN and South Asia as well as New Zealand and Australia, with an eye to establishing close cooperation and together achieving regional development and prosperity." ²⁵ As more details of the NSP emerged, and as implementation plans began to appear in September, India was frequently identified as one focus of the initiative.²⁶

²² "Look East' policy now turned into 'Act East' policy: Modi," *The Hindu*, November 13, 2014, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/look-east-policy-now-turned-into-act-east-polic y-modi/article6595186.ece.

²³ Manu Balchandran, "A Complete Timeline of India-China Relations Since Modi Took Charge," *Quartz India*, May 9, 2018, https://qz.com/404869/a-complete-timeline-of-india-china-relations-since-modi-took-charge.

²⁴ Office of Trade Negotiations, Executive Yuan, "President Tsai convenes meeting on international economic and trade strategy, adopts guidelines for 'New Southbound Policy'," August 16, 2016, Office of Trade Negotiations, Executive Yuan, https://www.moea.gov.tw/Mns/otn_e/content/Content.aspx?menu_id=19289.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Executive Yuan, R.O.C.

By September, India and Taiwan had signed an air services agreement designed to build a solid foundation for the development of civil aviation relations, opening the door to increased bilateral trade and economic cooperation. That same month, the two nations signed an agricultural MOU under which Taiwan would "collaborate closely with India in the planning, production, processing, distribution, and marketing of aquaculture, farm, fishery, horticulture and livestock products based on the principals of equality and reciprocity."²⁷

Shortly thereafter, Taiwan's Office of Trade Negotiations (OTN), the organization responsible for coordinating the work plans of Taiwanese Ministries and agencies posted four initial implementation goals that would go into effect on January 1 2017:

•Economic and trade cooperation: Reinforce industrial cooperation and economic and trade expansion; facilitate cooperation on infrastructure construction projects; promote system integration service exports and financial assistance.²⁸

•Talent exchanges: Leverage the complementary nature of human resources between Taiwan and the New Southbound Policy-target countries by cooperating to cultivate human talent under the guiding principle of "people-centered, bilateral, diversified exchanges."²⁹

•Resource sharing: Reinforce Taiwan's partnership with New

⁽Taiwan), "New Southbound Policy Implementation Plans," Bureau of Foreign Trade, Ministry of Economic Affairs, Executive Yuan, R.O.C. (Taiwan), https://newsouthboundpolicy.trade.gov.tw/English/PageDetail?pageID=49&nodeID=94.

²⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), "Taiwan, India Sign Deals on Air Services and Agricultural Cooperation," September 13, 2016, New Southbound Policy Portal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), https://nspp.mofa.gov.tw/nsppe.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

Southbound Policy-target countries and strive for bilateral or multilateral cooperation opportunities based on Taiwan's strengths in medical care, culture, tourism, science and technology as well as agriculture.³⁰

•Regional connectivity: Promote bilateral and multilateral institutionalized cooperation; raise the official status of bilateral negotiations and dialogues; establish partnerships with New Southbound Policy-target countries through international cooperation.³¹

V. The New Southbound Race to India

In February 2017, a Taiwanese delegation including three parliamentarians visited India as members of the Taiwan-India Parliamentary Friendship Association, formed to forge "closer ties between Indian and Taiwanese lawmakers" and to strengthen "two-way collaborations."³² The nationalist tabloid *Global Times*, affiliated with the Communist Party of China, denounced the visit, using scare quotes as it described the female "parliamentary" delegation from Taiwan, and suggested that by challenging China over the Taiwan question, India was "playing with fire."³³

The visit and Chinese media response came at a time when, according to Indian media,

relations between India and China have hit a rough patch over Beijing's repeated blocking of New Delhi's efforts to get Pakistan-based terrorists like Maulana Masood Azhar

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Rudroneel Ghosh, "Taiwanese Delegation Visits India," *Times of India*, February 14, 2017, https://blogs.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/talkingturkey/taiwanese-parliamentary-delegation-visits-india.

³³ Yu Ning, "New Delhi Will Suffer Losses if it plays Taiwan Card," *Global Times*, February 14, 2017, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1033001.shtml.

proscribed at the UN. Plus, China is seen to be the main obstacle to India's membership bid at the Nuclear Supplier Group. New Delhi has also raised objections to Beijing's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that passes through parts of Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir.³⁴

The Official Chinese public response came in the form of a regularly scheduled press conference and Questions and Answers directed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson. In response to a question about India "taking revenge on China" by allowing the legislators to visit, spokesperson Geng Shuang said:

We have long been opposing all forms of official contact and interactions between Taiwan and countries that have diplomatic relations with China, as well as their mutual deployment of official institutions. This position is consistent and clear-cut. The Indian side has made commitments on Taiwan-related issues. It is hoped that the Indian side will respect and understand China's core concerns, uphold the one-China principle, properly handle Taiwan-related issues with prudence, and work with China to maintain the sound and steady growth of China-India relations.³⁵

Geng also reported that "the Chinese side has lodged solemn representations with the Indian side," but when pressed to provide additional details about how or with whom Chinese concerns had been registered,

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang's Regular Press Conference on February 15, 2017," February 15, 2017, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t143880 8.shtml.

Shuang suggested that "not all diplomatic activities are open to the public. All that I can tell you is that the Chinese side has lodged representations with the Indian side."³⁶

India's Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, Swarup Vikas, brushed off the visit as relatively benign and made no mention of a Chinese complaint:

We understand that a group of Taiwanese academics and business persons, including a couple of legislators, is visiting India. Such informal groups have visited India in the past as well for business, religious and tourist purposes. I understand that they do so to China as well. There is nothing new or unusual about such visits and political meanings should not be read into them.³⁷

Indian media suggested that the timing and importance of the Taiwanese legislators visit was more significant than the government suggested since the announcement "came within hours of a major dinner hosted by BJP leader Ram Madhav in Delhi in honour of the delegation."³⁸ That the national general secretary of the ruling party would host the legislators the week before Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar was scheduled to visit Beijing, was seen by press as noteworthy. Apart from comments made by the two spokesmen, and media commentaries in China and India on the significance of the visit, no other public announcements were made about the visit.

In May 2017, India declined China's invitation to attend the Belt and

³⁶ Ibid.

 ³⁷ Atul Aneja and Khallol Bhattacherjee, 'India Says Taiwan Team in Nonpolitical,' *The Hindu*, February 16, 2017, http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/India-says-Taiwan-team-is-non-political/article17309165.ece.
³⁸ Ibid.

Road initiative summit in Beijing and released a pointed official statement listing its many objections to China's initiative including a veiled suggestion that it did not respect the "sovereignty and territorial integrity," of other nations.³⁹ India has long been concerned that the Belt and Road initiative was expansionist but has done little except voice concerns publicly and avoid attendance at any event that showcased Beijing's initiative. That same month the Taipei World Trade Centre (TWTC) office opened in New Delhi, TECC opened an investment desk at its Delhi office and Taiwan held its first ever Expo, "at a time," according to Walter Yeh, President and CEO of Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TAITRA), "when many companies in both the countries are keen to tie-up with each other for economic benefits."⁴⁰

In December, India and Taiwan signed a memorandum of understanding on industrial collaboration. China's *Global Times* reported that the MOU was being used to test India's relations with China and was "an alarming move that could sabotage the recent smoothing of Sino-Indian relations."⁴¹

The "smoothing" of relations may be a bit of a journalistic stretch considering that from June to August of 2017, India and China had engaged in their longest and most serious military stand-off in decades, facing off on

³⁹ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Official Spokesperson's response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum," May 13, 2017, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, http://mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/ 28463/Official_Spokespersons_response_to_a_query_on_participation_of_India_in_OB ORBRI_Forum.

⁴⁰ "First-Ever Taiwan Expo to be Held Here in May," *Times of India*, April 17, 2018, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/first-ever-taiwan-expo-to-be -held-here-in-may/articleshow/63804487.cms.

⁴¹ Xiaoci Deng, "India Cozies Up to Taiwan in Foolish Move," *Global Times*, December 19, 2017, http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1081121.shtml.

the Doklam Plateau in neighboring Bhutan.⁴² By late October 2017, press was reporting that while the "disengagement" was a reduction in tensions between India and China just days ahead of Modi's planned meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the BRICS summit in Xiamen, both the PLA and the Indian Army remained on disputed territory in Doklam. "In practice, troops on both sides retreated their positions from the stand-off point by 150 meters each."⁴³

In mid-December, just prior to the *Global Times* article on India-Taiwan relations, and coincidentally airing during the Russia-India-China ministerial meetings in New Delhi, New Delhi Television (NDTV) was showing "new satellite images" of the Doklam area that revealed "the Chinese have expanded multiple stretches of road in the disputed area, just a short distance from the site where Indian and Chinese soldiers faced off for 70 days earlier this year."⁴⁴

At a time when Indian television and print media were denouncing Chinese aggression and expansionism, the Chinese State-affiliated Global Times was denouncing the India-Taiwan MOU, the fifth such agreement since Tsai Ing-wen's election, as foolish and provocative.

India is using the Taiwan question as a bargaining chip in exchange for China's support and concession on its own territorial disputes. It is also possible that India is staying close with Taiwan to serve as a friendly signal toward the US,

⁴² For more on the Doklam Crisis see Ankit Panda, "The Doklam Standoff Between India and China is far from Over," *The Diplomat*, October 22, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/ the-doklam-standoff-between-india-and-china-is-far-from-over.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ankit Panda, "Making Sense of the Chinese People's Liberation Army's New Tracks at Doklam," *The Diplomat*, December 14, 2017, https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/ making-sense-of-the-chinese-peoples-liberation-armys-new-tracks-at-doklam.

which just released a new national security strategy branding China as a "rival power."⁴⁵

In this response, Chinese media was not only signaling Beijing's concerns about India's growing closer to Taiwan, but also about India's growing relationship with the U.S. at the expense of China.

In February 2018, Prime Minister Modi made a visit to Arunachal Pradesh to inaugurate the Dorjee Khandu state convention center. As with his last visit to Arunachal, this was severely criticized by the Chinese, who dispute Indian ownership of the territory. Speaking on behalf of the government, MFA spokesman Geng Shuang said in a formal statement:

China's position on the China-India boundary question is consistent and clear-cut. The Chinese government has never recognized the so-called Arunachal Pradesh and is firmly opposed to the Indian leader's visit to the disputed area. We will lodge stern representations with the Indian side.⁴⁶

Two months later, Indian press carried stories that Taiwan would be opening a trade office in New Delhi to provide services to Indian and Taiwanese companies looking to expand business. India's bilateral trade in 2017 was reported at nearly \$6.3 billion dollars, up a quarter from the previous year.

In the last week of April 2018, just one week after an announcement in the press that India and Taiwan might soon resume discussions on a free

⁴⁵ Remarks attributed to Wang Dehua, head of the Institute for South and Central Asian Studies at the Shanghai Municipal Center for International Studies in Xiaoci Deng, "India Cozies Up to Taiwan in Foolish Move."

⁴⁶ Atul Aneja, "China Slams Modis Visit to Arunachal Pradesh," *The Hindu*, February 15, 2018, http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-slams-modis-visit-to-arunachal-prade sh/article22763216.ece.

trade agreement, Prime Minister Modi and President Xi met in Wuhan, China to make a concerted, or at least semi-public effort to "reset" their relationship through the vehicle of an "informal summit" between the two leaders. The Wuhan summit allowed the two leaders an opportunity to exchange their views on multiple topics without a scripted agenda or formal talks.

The Indian MEA and Chinese MFA Press Releases revealed that the two leaders reviewed developments in India-China relations, agreed to strengthen the "Closer Development Partnership," to intensify efforts to seek a "fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement" to their border disputes, and to strengthen communication between their militaries in order to build trust and mutual understanding. The two leaders agreed on a joint development project in Afghanistan and committed to working together on terrorism, a stance which will no doubt upset China's long-standing ally, Pakistan. The Chinese report suggested that the two leaders "drew a grand blueprint for the China-India comprehensive cooperation," and that the meeting had "deepened the friendship and mutual trust between the two leaders and created a new model for China-India leadership exchanges, writing a new chapter for China-India relations and exerting positive influence on regional and global stability and development.

No mention was made in either statement about Taiwan. $^{47\ 48}$

⁴⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "India-China Informal Summit at Wuhan," April 28, 2018, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, http://mea.gov.in/press-releases.htm?dtl/29853/IndiaChina_Informal_Summit_at_Wuhan.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Regular Press Conference on May 2, 2018," May 2, 2018, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the People's Republic of China, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t155622 4.shtml.

There is no way of knowing whether Xi raised the issue of India's growing relationship with Taiwan with Modi, or whether Modi used it as a talking point to emphasize other issues under discussion, but it must have been clearly on the minds of both leaders, whether mentioned or not. Commentators have watched over the past year to see how the India-China reset might play out in real terms, and whether or not the new relationship between Beijing and New Delhi would affect India's relationship with Taiwan. Whatever the promise of a new relationship might have meant in theory, the relationship seems to have reverted to a normal level of competing priorities. In March, "China blocked for a fourth time a U.N. Security Council effort to blacklist the leader of an anti-India terrorist group, which set into motion tit-for-tat airstrikes between nuclear-armed India and Pakistan in February."⁴⁹ While India has shown some restraint towards China since Wuhan; adopting a more cautious approach on Tibet, relaxing its rhetoric on the Belt and Road Initiative and easing off of direct rebukes of policy differences with Beijing, China has not reciprocated in any meaningful way.

In July 2018, Indian national carrier Air India changed the name of Taiwan to Chinese Taipei on its website, and issued a statement suggesting that it had down so at the direction of the Ministry of External Affairs. Asked by the media whether the Ministry had in fact directed the change, Ministry spokesman Shri Raveesh Kumar said,"I can tell you that Air India's decision to rename the destination of Taiwan and Chinese Taipei is entirely consistent with international norms and our own position on Taiwan since 1949."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Atman Trivedi, "One Year On, Should India Rethink Its Reset with China?" War on the Rocks, April 17, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/one-year-on-should-indiarethink-its-reset-with-china.

⁵⁰ Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, "Transcript of Weekly Media

China welcomed the change and asserted that foreign companies operating in the country must obey China's laws and respect its sovereignty and territorial integrity. Taiwan was not pleased. The Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India (TECC) lodged protests with the Ministry of External Affairs and issued a statement on it's website suggesting that TECC was

deeply disappointed with Air India changing "Taiwan" into "Chinese Taipei" on its website and regrets that this move taken by Air India, a state-owned airline, can be seen as a gesture of succumbing to the unreasonable and absurd pressure from China.⁵¹

In spite of its displeasure with the incident, Taiwan continued to seek ways to improve its relationship with India while weaning itself away from economic reliance on China. "India is the jewel in our external economic strategy," said James Huang, chair of the Taiwan External Trade Development Council.⁵²

VI. India's Risk Versus Gain Calculus

While Taiwan was obviously never officially part of India's "Act East Policy" likely in deference to its longstanding "One China Policy," it is clear that Delhi saw little risk in improving and expanding relations with Taiwan prior to the Wuhan summit. Taipei still offers Delhi some real and potential

Briefing by Official Spokesperson, (July 05, 2018)," July 6, 2018, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, https://www.mea.gov.in/media-briefings.htm?dtl/30035/transcript+of+weekly+media+briefing+by+official+spokesperson+july+05+2018.

⁵¹ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "Taiwan lodges protest with MEA on Air India Decision to change name on website," *Economic Times*, July 6, 2018, https://m.economictimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/taiwan-lodges-protest-with-meaon-air-india-decision-to-change-name-on-website/articleshow/64873266.cms.

⁵² Edward White, "Taiwan turns to India to shake off shackles of China dependence," *Financial Times*, January 3, 2019, ttps://www.ft.com/content/d9f4d9fc-0434-11e9-9d01cd4d49afbbe3.

opportunities for investment, trade, research and development, and technology enhancements, but it serves an equal if not more valuable function to India as a lever in Delhi-Beijing dialogues and a growing reminder to Beijing that India refuses to be encircled or bullied.

More concerning to China may be India's relationship with other ASEAN nations and Delhi's growing self-realization that India could serve as the counterbalance to China that other nations have long suggested it could be. India's relationship with Taiwan is more controllable, more visible, and currently still more benign than relationships it may be developing with Japan, Vietnam, Philippines or other countries with which China has real territorial disputes.

India appears to have remained cautious about crossing unspoken red-lines. There is no Indian Military Attaché in Taiwan or Taiwanese Attaché in New Delhi, even though the suggestion has been made by defense experts in both nations. "Taiwan's National Defense University (NDU) has offered regular courses on PLA Studies to foreign military officers and is keen to host Indian military officers," but India has, so far, not accepted.⁵³ There appears to be no evidence that either Taiwan or India have previously sold or given armaments to the other, although Indian defense contractors appear in July 2018, to have submitted design proposals along with Japanese, U.S. and European designers, for Taiwan's new indigenous submarine. The Indigenous Defense Submarine (IDS) design program is expected to be completed late in 2018.⁵⁴ As the relationship progresses, it is probable that Indian and Taiwanese defense industries will

⁵³ Tien-sze Fang, "India-Taiwan Relations: A Comprehensive Security Perspective," *Indian Defence Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4, October-December 2015, Indian Defence Review, http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/india-taiwan-relations-a-comprehensive-security-perspective.

⁵⁴ Franz-Stefan Gady, "India, Japan to Submit Design Proposals for Taiwan's New Indigenous Submarine," *The Diplomat*, July 12, 2018, https://thediplomat.com/2018/07/ india-japan-to-submit-design-proposals-for-taiwans-new-indigenous-submarine.

benefit from technology exchanges and research and development, but it is still too early to observe. For the time being, India will likely continue to let the relationship play out, testing China's forbearance, and gaining as much as possible from the relationship.

VII. Taiwan's NSP Approach to India is a Win-Win

Improving and building relations with India produces little downside for Taiwan. Economically, India provides a huge market (1.2 billion people) for Taiwanese goods and services, and a broad range of sector opportunities with massive growth potential; such as solar power, auto components and parts, chemical research and manufacturing, engineering, and information and communication technologies.

India's needs often match Taiwan's capabilities. For example, India has the third largest solar power market in the world but imports 85% of its solar technologies, mainly from China. Taiwan produces world class solar technologies, but the solar power market in Taiwan is fully saturated – growth will have to come through exports.⁵⁵ Indians purchased 109 million smart phones in 2016 in a market where one Taiwanese company, Micromax, has a 30% market share on supplying smart-phones chips for India's indigenously manufactured phones.⁵⁶

Taiwan's population is aging, while India's youth and large middle class provide opportunities for human capital growth, cultural exchange, and as the NSP goals suggest, "people-centered, bilateral, diversified exchanges."⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Jonathan Lalremruata, "India Rising: Solar Industry and Opportunities for Taiwan," *Digitimes*, April 19, 2018, https://www.digitimes.com/news/a20180418VL200.html.

⁵⁶ Jens Kastner, "Eyes Fixed on India," *Taiwan Business Topic*, November 21, 2017, https://topics.amcham.com.tw/2017/11/eyes-fixed-india.

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), "Taiwan, India Sign Deals on

Taiwan has no other significant South Asian relationships. Using India as an entry point into the rest of the region may help Taiwan economically. Strengthening ties to India allows Taiwan some level of independence from Beijing's control, but sends a far less hostile message to China than would a semi-diplomatic relationship with Japan or Vietnam.⁵⁸

On the security front, opportunities for cooperation may seem scarce; after all India and Taiwan appear to have little historical connection in that regard. Policies and positions do change over time, but India's "One China Policy" has kept it, so far, from providing any hint of a relationship with Taiwan based on mutual defense or security cooperation. Indians tend to take a long view on history however, and one case study may demonstrate India's continued respect for the India-Taiwan security connection.

VIII. Ramgarh Cemetery – The Quiet Resistance?

During World War II, in the face of Japanese advances into Burma, the government of the Republic of China sent 100,000 soldiers of the Chinese Expeditionary Forces (CEF) to Burma where they fought against the Japanese alongside allied forces. Many of the CEF soldiers were trained at Ramgarh Cantonment in Jharkhand State, India and after the war, with the approval of the then British Government of India, the ROC established a Chinese cemetery at Ramgarh, in which 667 Chinese soldiers remain interred. In the middle of the cemetery, there is an obelisk honoring Chiang Kai-Shek, and to one side, a Chinese stupa and Buddhist temple where Chinese visitors can pray.⁵⁹

Air Services and Agricultural Cooperation," September 13, 2016, New Southbound Policy Portal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of China (Taiwan), https://nspp.mofa.gov.tw/nsppe.

⁵⁸ While neither Japan nor Vietnam accord Taiwan diplomatic relations, both have working level relationships and both have cultural centers in Taipei.

⁵⁹ "Chinese Expeditionary Force in Burma 1942," Fire and Fury Games,

In 1982 and again in 2011, the Government of Taiwan gave funds to the Ramgarh Cantonment to renovate and renew the cemetery. In 1995, a special task force from the Ministry of National Defense, ROC came to the cemetery and held a memorial service and in 2000 a memorial tablet was erected in the Martyrs Shrine in Taiwan, honoring the fallen CEF soldiers. According to the Taiwan Educational and Cultural Center, "TECC and officials from Taiwan visit the cemetery every year during spring and autumn to pay tribute to the CEF soldiers."⁶¹

In January of 2018, a five-member team from the PRC consulate in Kolkata visited the cemetery to pay tribute to the "Chinese martyrs who fought against Japan during the war."⁶² After the visit, several Indian newspapers reported Ramgarh officials as having been told by the Chinese consul general that China had formally requested the state government to develop "the historic cemetery as a tourist destination." The consul general said "the Chinese cemetery in Ramgarh is a silent witness of Indo-China friendship as soldiers buried in the cemetery had stopped Japanese forces from occupying Indian territory."⁶³

In response to PRC efforts to make Ramgarh a tourist destination and symbol of Indo-Chinese friendship, TECC released a quiet, but firmly worded response that reminded those interested that the CEF was a force established under the ROC and that:

http://www.fireandfury.com/orbats/pacburmachina1942_3.pdf.

⁶⁰ Irashad Alam Khan, "Unsung Heroes in Alien Land," *The Telegraph*, March 25, 2003, https://www.telegraphindia.com/1030325/asp/jharkhand/story_1797211.asp.

⁶¹ Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, "TECC Paid Tribute to the WWII Heroes at the Ramgarh Cemetery," Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, April 27, 2018, https://www.roc-taiwan.org/in_en/post/3149.html.

⁶² "China wants historical cemetery at Ramgarh to be turned into global tourist spot," *The Indian Express*, January 14, 2018, http://indianexpress.com/article/india/china-historical-cemetry-ramgarh-global-tourist-spot-5023992.

⁶³ Ibid.

historical facts and the status of ROC management to the Ramgargh cemetery should be affirmed and respected by all aspects, and shall not be distorted by any unreasonable reason or inappropriate manner. The historical truth and the status quo of the Ramgargh Cemetery should always be kept in its original merit.⁶⁴

After further reminding readers that TECC had been scrupulous over the years about sticking to historical facts, and in allowing all interested Chinese to visit the cemetery, it closed with a strong suggestion that all those involved:

should continuously show respect towards the historic facts and pay sincerely tribute to the martyrs. Should there be any thought about modification to the cemetery, it should be a must to consult with the TECC first, which is currently responsible for management of the cemetery. If necessary, all parties may consult on the matter. TECC solemnly appeals that all parties should seriously respect the history of ROC WWII Expeditionary Force and the martyrs spirit. All parties should be self-restrained and avoid unilaterally changing history; any changes to the Ramgargh Cemetery should acquire the concurrence of the ROC government.⁶⁵

This is a notable development because it suggests that the TECC, as a representative of Taiwan feels empowered or has been empowered to push back directly, however quietly on a back page of the TECC website, against

 ⁶⁴ Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, "The solemn stance of Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in India on the issue concerning the ROC WWII Expeditionary Force Ramgarh Cemetery," Taipei Economic and Cultural Center in India, January 22, 2018, https://www.roc-taiwan.org/in_en/post/2999.html.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

PRC manipulation of "historical facts," and to insert itself between the two sovereign nations of India and the PRC where the future of the cemetery is concerned. Images from April 27, 2018, when TECC officials visited Ramgarh cemetery to pay homage to the fallen, show the flags of India and the Republic of China (Taiwan) in the background. The PRC flag is not included.⁶⁶ As of August 2019, there has been no announcement from India on a change of status for Ramgarh.

IX. Conclusion

India's relationships with Taiwan and China continue to evolve. Taiwan is pinning its hopes on India as a major trading partner. As of August 2019, there has not been an official mention of Taiwan on the Indian Ministry of External Affairs website since the July 2018 clarification on Air India's destination name change. TECC continues to seek annual visits for Taiwanese officials to India, and there has yet to be any indication that India would seek to reduce those visits.

India still has concerns over China's increasing influence in the Indian ocean, its expansionist One Belt One Road policy and its ongoing support for rival Pakistan but is increasingly embracing China as a trade and diplomatic partner. ⁶⁷ This may be in part because of recent changes in the relationship with the U.S. The United States' withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Trump administration's decision to strip India of special trade status could be contributing factors to India's growing relationship with China. Analysts at the Finnish Institute of International

⁶⁶ "TECC Paid Tribute to the WWII Heroes at the Ramgarh Cemetery."

⁶⁷ A meeting in June 2019 between Indian Prime Minister Modi, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladmir Putin on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Osaka that came just days after a similar meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Bishkek, suggests that India increasingly sees itself as China's peer in a multilateral world order.

Affairs have predicted that bilateral trade between China and India could exceed U.S.-China trade by as early as 2020.⁶⁸ From defeated supplicant in 1962, to a growing Chinese market in the 2000s, to nuclear and economic rival in 2018-19, India's relationship with China has changed dramatically, in part because of its shared history and willingness to interact with Taiwan.

⁶⁸ Bart Gaens and Olli Ruohomäki, "India's 'Look East'--'Act East' Policy: Hedging as a Foreign Policy Tool," Finnish Institute of International Affairs, June 5, 2017, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, https://www.fiia.fi/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/bp222_indias-look-east--act-east-policy.pdf.

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https://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2013/04/india-and-china-square.

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