

Terrorism as a factor in Sino-Indian Relations

M.A. Sem IV

M.A. Sem IV

The rise of terrorism in the sub-continent is a matter of serious concern for both India and China. Both the countries are facing the brunt of religious fundamentalism which is a growing menace in the 21st Century. There is a common threat that is being posed by terrorism and the need is to reiterate their strong condemnation of and resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. China's support to Pakistan despite its claims to be against all forms of terrorism perturbs Indian policy makers and puts a question mark on the Chinese intentions. India has been fighting a long and hard battle against terrorism and expects its neighbour to co-operate in fighting the real threat of cross border terrorism that is posing danger to ~~peace~~^{peace} and stability in South Asia.

The ~~for~~ impact of the factor of terrorism on the bilateral ties between India and China cannot be seen as being independent of Sino-Pakistan ties and China's "all weather" friendship with Pakistan.

Pakistan.¹ China had been wary of India's growing dominance and soft power influence in the South Asian region. So, in order to counter this, China has had a ~~strong~~ ^{stable} strong relation with Pakistan by supporting its claim on Kashmir and helped it militarily as well as economically throughout the ^{19th} 20th Century since its formation. China has been Pakistan's main ally. The 'Sino - Pakistani Entente Cordiale', as John Carver calls it, has proved itself to be remarkably resilient over the years.² Despite improving relations with India, China has not been less warm towards Pakistan and has proven itself to be the most reliable economic partner and arms supplier to Islamabad over the years and has provided it with military equipment and economic aid when no other country did so.

China's relationship with Pakistan, despite its support to the terrorist organisations and being turned to be a fertile of breeding ground for terrorism, has been defined as "far more than just a common hostility towards India"³ This relationship provides China not only with military security by tying up India on the Western frontiers, but also provides

(1)

it with a way of reducing India's influence in Asia and improving China's own stand in the Islamic world by displaying the warmth of its ties with a Muslim country. However, there has been a significant change in the foreign policy measures of both the countries.

The key factors which have shaped the foreign policy perspective of both the countries in the post-cold war era are their ^{changing} perception of the global political order which has led to consensuses on several issues. This is driven by the desire to accommodate changes in the politics of the international sphere. The shift to a co-operative and accommodative framework is due to the fact that there has been growing influence of non-governmental ~~domestic~~ ^{domestic} actors and inclusion of a pragmatic approach based on consensus building. China has understood the fact that India cannot be prevented from being a major regional player in the Indian sub-continent and it will continuously work towards making a place for itself in the political environment of Asia. China's priorities lie in East Asia and in South China

sea and it cannot form a stable relationship with East Asian countries if it is constantly at loggerheads with India. A hostile relationship will destabilise the regional balance of power and will allow other global players to like US to enter the political scene, of which China is very wary.

China is in a mood to engage India positively and its all ~~weath~~ time friendly relations with Pakistan has become a burden for it mainly because of Pakistan's ^{covert} involvement in ~~terrorist~~ activist attitude towards terrorism. The post 2001 scenario i.e after the World Trade Centre attack, China's ~~ps~~ perception toward on terrorism has changed drastically and it has not opposed India's stand on terrorism. One important reason for this change is mainly the ethnic ~~ten~~ and religious tensions that China is facing in its Xinjiang province. The paradigm shift on terrorism is also due to the fear of US presence in the region and its close alliance with India which has made India a major player ~~in~~ of the sub-continent politics. China cannot

afford an aggressive US at its backyard. The
omnious presence of the US military has
further upset China's strategic balance, its
its multipolar vision of the world order and
its ambitions of being a superpower in Asia.
China, has, however, responded ~~positively~~ positively
to US war on terrorism and it has never
missed upon an opportunity to cultivate US
goodwill.⁵ China opposes and strongly condemns
all forms of terrorism but, many a times it has remained
silent on the issue of state sponsored
terrorism by Pakistan. For eg: After the
infamous Phulwama Attack, Chinese spokes-
person condemned the attack but failed to
mention the terrorist organisation, Jaish-e-
Mohammed and its leader Azhar Mahmood's
name in its statement, though the organi-
sation had already accepted that they
were behind the attack. China's unaccep-
tance of the fact has been one of the greatest
hinderances in the relationship between India
and China. Most attribute China's unaccep-
tance as a favour to Pakistan. China has
always adopted the Pakistan card to tie India
down in South Asia.⁶ It helped Pakistan
become a nuclear power and China -
Pakistan nexus has put a danger on India's

security by exceeding New Delhi's capacity to tackle Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

Each time India had attempted to list Pakistan based terror outfits in the United Nations Security Council, China had blocked it by using its veto power. China itself is confronted with Uighur terrorism in its Xinjiang province but, it has been able to curb it both ^{by} institutionally and bilaterally measures. Institutionally, China has effectively employed the the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation to counter the terrorist activities in the province. On the bilateral front, it has successfully persuaded Pakistan to adopt a strict counter terrorism policy relating to the Uighurs. It has also enlisted US support in branding the East Turkestan Islamic Movement as a terrorist group. But, it China has adopted a hypocritical attitude when it comes to supporting India's counter-terrorism efforts. This double standard of China is in opposition to the April-2018 Wuhan spirit in which both the sides ⁶⁵ recognised the common threat

①

posed by terrorism, and reiterated the strong condemnation of and resolute opposition to terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. They committed themselves to co-operate on counter terrorism.⁵⁷

But, the Phulwama attack and the Balakot airstrikes changed the Chinese perspective on global terrorism. mainly due to the international pressure and its fear of getting isolated in its war against terrorism. China's decision to support Pakistan based terror chief Masood Azhar being sanctioned by United Nations has been attributed to the above mentioned factors. But, it also reflects the strong push on the issue by the United States, both openly and behind closed doors. Earlier, the ban on Masood, with an UN proposal to subject him to an asset freeze and travel ban had been put on hold by Beijing time and again which was perturbing New Delhi to a great extent. But, after the Phulwama incidence that brought India and Pakistan to the brink of war, US, UK and France moved a draft

Resolution in the UNSC to Blacklist Masood. Though, China opposed the move initially, but gave in to the international pressure majorly in a bid to impress US. Beijing has been watching closely the Trump's administration's emphasis and support to India. The US strategy aims at raising America's profile in the region and includes India as a key partner. New Delhi and Washington are coming closer than ever before and this is not what China wants and any cost.

In addition to this factor, China has realised that Pakistan is becoming a rouge nation when it comes to dealing with the issue of terrorism. China, ~~so~~ in particular, and the world in general has noticed that the present India is not the same old country which ~~believed in~~ was

a 'soft state'. The Balakot airstrikes have proved that the new regime will retaliate when it comes to national security and will not hesitate in taking harsh and stringent measures in order to tackle the ~~issue~~ menace of terrorism. It is also worth noting here that China did not

Conclusion - overtly criticise New Delhi after the air strikes. The listing of Masood Azhar as a global

Terrorism is being seen as a diplomatic victory by India and this can go a long way in improving the Sino-Indian bilateral ties in the distant future. This was a key issue that has been dominating India's ties with China. Now, that this has been resolved, the neighbours can focus on those of areas of common interest where they might be able to work together. It is in the interest of both New Delhi and Beijing to keep its channels of communication open. It has removed a major hurdle of suspicion in Indian circles about the Chinese intentions to fight against Terrorism.

The rise of China and India has a great potential to transform the geo-political landscape and in this context the bilateral ties have acquired a new meaning in the 21st Century. The tensions have been replaced by co-operation and consensus in several areas. They have been trying to incorporate the realities of global politics and economics.

Despite hurdles and obstacles, the current Century has witnessed a new paradigm shift in the policies of the Asian giants which can be defined as a pragmatic approach.