J   C   M

№ 3

Lukas Nagel

Sino-Indian Mutual Perceptions: Intercultural Students' Discourse on Ontological Security and Identity

A critical review of the history of the discursive formation of Sino-Indian relations suggests that the largely negative mutual perceptions of the Chinese and Indian public and media are opposed by the optimistic discourse of the two nations' political and economic elites. This is accompanied by a juxtaposed, binary discourse of the bilateral relationship between members of the liberal and realist camps in academia. While the former largely emphasises mutual economic cooperation, the latter argues that future tensions are inexorable due to the difficult past and territorial issues. A critical discourse analysis is applied to numerous academic, political, and journalistic sources, as well as 20 semi-structured interviews with Indian and Chinese exchange students in both countries, to understand the degree to which they conform with the dominant discursive speech formation. The results confirm a strong difference between state and academic/public perceptions. In contrast, the interviews with exchange students appear to mix characteristics of both, leaning towards cooperation. They indicate a stronger ontological security fixation on the Indian side with regard to China than vice versa and a strong power imbalance in favour of China. Although the students made frequent use of mutual stereotyping, they were generally optimistic and critical of the prevalent negative discourse and mutual lack of knowledge and trust. The students tended to emphasize efforts to improve mutual ties through economic and cultural cooperation, exchanges, and the solution of the border issue.

Sino-Indian Mutual Perceptions

Intercultural Students' Discourse on Ontological Security and Identity

By

Lukas Nagel

1. Introduction and Research Gap

In recent years, both China and India have come to be considered rising powers, becoming the focus of a great variety of scholarship, comparisons, and predictions (e.g., see Lal 2009; Manson 2010; Ratha and Mahapatra 2015; Freeman 2018; Roy-Chaudhury 2018). It has become commonplace to draw parallels between China and India as the 'greatest civilisations in the history of the human race' (Goh 2006: p. 263), the 'two oldest continuous civilisations[1] in the world' (Lal 2009: p. 44), 'ancient political and cultural powers' (Manson 2010: p. 86), and even 'glorious ancient civilisations' (Huang 2005: p. 631). It is also common to juxtapose China and India in a systemized manner in terms of population, territory, literacy, GDP, Gini coefficient, exports, industrial output, and so on, in schoolbooks (Huang 2005: p. 632), debates (Lal 2009: p. 42), and online discussion.[2] Roy-Chaudhury (2018: p. 99) argues that while Sino-Indian relations are 'well researched', the mutual views of both nations are still inadequately understood.

It has been said that the media coverage of Sino-Indian relations is both 'overly optimistic' and 'overly pessimistic' (Goh 2006: p. 265) and supports 'old and often distorted views' of the bilateral relations (Bhattacharya 2019: p. 262). Academic literature on Sino-Indian relations has often led to a binary discourse, with oversimplified[3] and contested linguistic terms, as described by Coleman (2013), juxtaposing a relationship of 'friend versus foe'. In terms of international relations (IR) theory and policy analysis, this has often resulted in an oversimplified division between a liberal-

[1] The well-known journalist Edgar Snow may have been the first to declare China and India the 'oldest continuous civilisations in the world', noting their 'close religious and cultural ties' (Snow 1944).

[2] The blogs and websites on which it is common to find heated nationalist debates over which country is 'greater' include http://country-facts.findthedata.com/compare/12-122/China-vs-India
and http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/10/comparing-india-and-china.

[3] Many of these works have been severely criticised because they are often based on populist and overly simplified notions of economics and politics that lead to dubious relativism, stereotypes, and simplistic assessments (Ma and Feo-Giet 2014; Bardhan 2010).

Lukas Nagel

optimistic and a realist-pessimistic explanation[4] of the contemporary political and economic realities. The realist camp predicts an inevitable power rivalry between the two, while the neo-liberalists believe in growing multilateral cooperation and interdependence (Panda 2013: p. 669; Lamy 2011: p. 117). This division into two main camps has led to an analytical cleavage or 'paradigm war' (Holslag 2010: p. 3), resulting in black and white imagery that has influenced countless academic publications, often cynically labelled as 'Dragon and Elephant airport books' (Ma and Feo-Giet 2014: p. 3). Furthermore, popular analyses often try to use the countries as representative case studies to decode the overall relationship between authoritarianism and democracy and different development paradigms[5] (Bardhan 2010). The use of India as an example of democracy and of the PRC as an authoritarian regime has inspired discussion,[6] especially in relation to comparisons of their economic and political success (Lal 2009: p. 43).

Recently, there have been calls to 'set the record straight' (Bhattacharya 2019), apply a 'ground-up approach' in place of 'high politics' (Guyot-Rechard 2017: p. 5), focus on bilateral perceptions (Roy-Chaudhury 2018), and introduce fresh ways of understanding Sino-Chinese relations (e.g. Lintner 2018; Sen 2018).

Thus, this paper argues that the contemporary bilateral relations between China and India are characterized by a misleading binary academic discourse of realist pessimism and liberal optimism. This research seeks to add a humble contribution to the growing body of alternative critical research. Within the countries themselves, the political and economic elites still tend to emphasize a neo-liberal relationship and cooperative discourse. The tone of the media and public polls in the two states reveals that general perceptions among the respective populations remain critical, highly sceptical, and rather pessimistic. It is crucial to note, however, that while exchange and communication occur at the political level, interpersonal contact between Indian and Chinese citizens remains extremely limited.

---

[4] Realism: e.g., Manson (2010) and Sidhu and Yuan (2003). Liberalism: Goh (2006), Raman (2011) Kumar and Shah (2019). A comparison of the two schools can be found in Holslag (2010), Siddiqi (2009), Roy-Chaudhury (2018).

[5] It has been argued for some time that many Asian nations face a strategic dilemma, named the 'Asian paradox': they rely primarily on the US and its allies of Japan and India for security, but on China for their economies (Karim and Islam 2018: p. 287). Soft power could be a valid strategy for improving Sino-Chinese relations (Karim and Islam 2018: p. 298). Again, this places India and China on two extremes of a spectrum; yet it also reveals a crucial sphere that is often neglected: culture and mutual exchange beyond security and trade.

[6] This simplified relationship between political system and economic success has been challenged by a number of scholars (e.g. Huang 2011; Bardhan 2010).

One of the most consistent groups in Sino-Indian exchange are students who have lived and studied in both nations. This study seeks to identify how these individuals view the bilateral relations and whether their perceptions indicate cultural reflexivity, differing from the mainstream. Since the number of exchange students is limited, this group has been largely understudied. This study intends to contribute to fill this gap by asking the following question:

How far do Chinese and Indian students abroad conform with the dominant discursive formation of contemporary Sino-Indian bilateral relations or differ from it to make sense of their intercultural experiences?

A critical discourse analysis (CDA) was conducted for the current work to deconstruct intercultural students' perceptions of bilateral relations based on political psychology.

2. Literature Review and Theory

2.1. Ontological Security

The incorporation of ontological security theory (OST) into political science generally – and IR in particular – is fairly recent, but it has quickly produced a diverse body of academic literature (e.g., Kinnvall 2004, 2007; Steele 2005, 2008; Mitzen 2006; Krolikowski 2008; Rumelili 2015). These works have largely been inspired by the writings of Anthony Giddens (1991). He defines OS as something that goes beyond the traditional concept of physical safety; namely, a 'sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual' (Giddens 1991: p. 243). According to this approach, OS provides the individual with a positive discourse about the self and identity to avoid 'existential anxiety' and maintain psychological sanity, and it works on a collective level as 'a protection of future threats' (Giddens 1991: p. 38-40).

Theorists of IR have explored this approach to analysis of politics at the state level. It is not only individuals who seek OS, but also collectives and even states.[7] Mitzen (2006), for example, argues that OST in relation to states can explain apparent anomalies in bilateral relations not explainable by a focus on physical security.

---

[7] This application does not go unchallenged. Critical voices on the applicability of ontological security for IR include Jackson (2004), Croft (2012), and Krolikowski (2008). The latter, for example, argues that the recycling of social theories from the individual level and usage in the discourse of the state-as-a-person is problematic, yet largely accepted and often appears without a critical stance (Krolikowski 2008: p. 109).

Lukas Nagel

Due to complex global changes, many collective group identities have lost relational ties that in the past gave them OS (Giddens 1991). One strategy for coping with these tremendous challenges is to 'demodernize' (Pathak 1998: p. 22), to turn back time and return to a safe place in which identity is well-defined and the world apparently simpler – or as Catarina Kinnvall puts it: collectives go back to 'an imagined past'[8] (Kinnvall 2004: p. 744), which may often result in identifying an 'other' who does not submit to the main narrative and is thus seen as a threat (Kinnvall 2004: p. 2007).

With the strengthening of capitalist forces and the corresponding weakening of the nation state, the latter often reinvents its legitimacy by providing OS (Krolikowski 2008: p. 124). Other groups may compete for the most compelling narrative; and consequently, the state, radical movements, and other groups (exchange students, in the current paper) often stand in opposition to one another and literally 'compete' for the trust and loyalty of the people via diverging discourses (Kinnvall 2004: p. 743). This study applies OST to explore the discourse of a small number of Sino-Indian intercultural students as members of a larger diaspora of nationals.

2.2. The Autobiographical Self and the Process of 'Othering'

As clarified above, OS asserts that the self relies on a dominant, autobiographical narrative. Accordingly, state actors become attached to this identity to make sense of their own politics in the chaotic sphere of international relations (Delehanty and Steele 2009: p. 531).

The general narrative of a collective or individual self relies largely on practices and discourses that differentiate "us" from "others". Thus, OS too is reliant on a variety of "identity markers" that distinguish the "self" from the "other" (Rumelili 2015: p. 56). By juxtaposing one's own constructed identity characteristics with those of others, the "self" and the "other" are constructed in a symbiotic interdependence (Ogilvie and Ashmore 1991: p. 286). Bauman (2003) argues that this leads to linguistic couples that juxtapose the normal/abnormal, ordinary/bizarre, domestic/wild, familiar/strange, and so on.

---

[8] Benedict Anderson (1983) has first coined this in 'Imagined Communities', in which he asserts that individuals of a nation perceive themselves as part of a larger group, even though they will never directly have any contact with most of its members.

In relation to the state or citizens of a nation, other insights from social identity construction indicate that individuals tend to prefer "their" own chosen group over "outgroups": membership of a group gives an individual a sense of belonging and raises their self-consciousness. Hence, each member of the collective has an interest in improving the status of their own group in comparison to the "other" because this will positively affect them and increase OS (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Hogg 1992). However, some argue that the process of "othering" may also be linked to the "demonising" of the other – or, in other words, projecting the negative traits onto the other that distinguish it from the "in-group" (Volkan 1997: p. 113; Murer 1999).

It is argued that OS is especially strong when related to a narrative of national pride or honour that is being challenged, as the myth of national salvation is often put into contrast with painful events in the national history that are embedded in collective history: 'Humiliation is thus one of the modes used to draw ethical boundaries between self and other, between domestic and foreign' (Callahan 2004: p. 203).

Volkan (1997: p. 36) describes these national humiliations as 'chosen traumas', which serves as a key concept in the CDA of the interviews of this study. Chosen traumas comprise a negative psychological recollection of events that befell the group in the past and they are usually linked to intense feelings. Some note that this process (Murer 1999) may lead to the conclusion that ethnic, religious, and national conflicts are timeless. 'Chosen glories' (Volkan 1997: p. 81), on the other hand, are the other side of the coin: boosting a groups' self-esteem and pride, often in opposition to the "other", who was humiliated. Both variations of historical narratives are typically surrounded by myths (Kinnvall 2004: p. 755).

3. Definitions and Relevance

As a society consists of diverse socio-political groups with very different identities and interests, a dominant narrative hardly ever goes unquestioned. Huysmans (1998), for example, studied the threat to group identities by internal others, and Delehanty and Steele argue that the gendered, largely masculine, autobiographical narrative of the state may be challenged by internal groups that have a more "feminine"[9] identity, which can relate to or oppose dominant narratives (2009: p. 527-

---

[9] Kinnvall (2004: p. 671) gives examples of where an idealized 'national character' is very much related to gender. It is further argued that these anti-mainstream narratives frequently draw on more 'feminine' characteristics of human conduct – such as cooperation, peace, mutual respect, trust, and friendship – in resistance to a pessimist, conflictual discourse (Ruddick 2001: p. 196).

Lukas Nagel

528). The growing influence of diaspora communities should be seen in the context of an increasingly globalised world, with the boundaries becoming 'porous and fuzzy' (Kinnvall and Svensson 2010: p. 285).

3.1. Influence of Diaspora Communities

In the context of rising migration, the definition of a "diaspora" is widening. Weinar (2010: p. 74) concludes that the original definition has been changed in response to a growing body of research, 'framing *diaspora* as almost any population on the move and no longer referring to the specific context of their existence'. It has also been proposed that "professional" communities abroad can also be considered diaspora: 'For example, science diasporas are communities of scientists who conduct their research away from their homeland' (Burns 2013: p.1). One "new" diaspora group, with increasing influence on the discourses in their home countries, is international students, a growing population engaged in a diversity of cross-cultural exchanges (Wang et al. 2015: p. 52).

3.2. International Students as Agents of "Intercultural Understanding"

Like other migration-related terms, "international student" has many different definitions, notably in relation to the required time spent abroad. While UNESCO (2019) makes no such reference and simply defines international students as people who 'crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin', the migration data portal (2019) cite two criteria: the individual must hold a 'non-resident visa' and they must be pursuing 'a tertiary degree (or higher) in the destination country'. Both definitions apply to the participants in this study.

The number of exchange students between China and India, however, is very striking for how low it is, especially when we consider that these are the most populous countries in the world and both have a strong focus on education. In 2011,[10] just 3,000 Chinese students were studying in India (compared with 100,000 in the US). Indian exchange students in China numbered approximately

---

[10] Unfortunately, it was not possible in November 2019 to obtain more recent data from Chinese or English websites on the absolute number of Chinese students in India. Websites such as Migration Data Portal, UNESCO's Institute for Statistics, and Project Atlas give numbers for the number of Indian students in China, but not vice versa. Moreover, the official website of the Chinese embassy in India appears to be poorly maintained: it rests on a non-secure, non-verified server; statistical numbers are nowhere to be found; and the last entries under 'China-India Relations' and 'Education Cooperation'/'Science and Technology Exchanges' are from 2006: in.china-embassy.org .rer

13,000 in 2015 (Daily News and Analysis 2015), 18,171 in the academic year 2016-2017 (Embassy of India in Beijing 2019), and 23,000 in 2019 (The Economic Times, 7 October 2019).

It is frequently argued that the "international experience" results in intercultural competences and sensitivities for students. However, studies have produced mixed findings. Some indicate that contact and mutual learning in optimal conditions has a very positive impact on prejudice reduction among individuals and groups (Allport 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Moline 2009). However, it has also been observed that negative contact more substantially *increases* biased attitudes than positive contact reduces them (Barlow et al. 2012) and that studies abroad can reaffirm preconceived stereotypes (Coleman 1998). Moreover, an 'international sojourn' as a 'temporary between-culture stay' (Ward et al. 2001) can be a traumatic event that may induce a multitude of cultural and mental problems (Brown and Holloway 2008; Meier and Daniels 2011; Kim 2001). For this study, both positive and negative experiences and perceptions of international students as part of growing scientific diasporas are of importance.

4. Data Collection and Methodology

Various sources are analysed for this study [11], including academic publications, public polls, newspaper outlets, and diplomatic press statements. Due to time and budget constraints, the interview sample comprises a total of 20 interviews, which were collected in India and the PRC in Mumbai, Delhi, Shanghai, and Beijing, at six universities, between February and April 2015. Purposive sampling aimed to find exchange students in both countries who had each studied in the other respective country.

Public and private universities, academic tutors, language schools, cultural organisations, and private individuals both in China and India were contacted either with an explanatory email or by telephone, introducing the research. The network was then expanded using a snowballing system. The interview consisted of a semi-structured questionnaire of five sections and 38 questions. A gender balance was achieved. The interviews lasted 70-100 minutes each and were thoroughly recorded. The data was then transcribed, coded, and analysed using CDA.

---

[11] The conduct in the field was based on the precise application of research ethics of the "Guidelines for Master Thesis" by the Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies at Lund University, Sweden.

Lukas Nagel

4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis

The definition and usage of "discourse analysis" is not unchallenged in academia (Wetherell 2001; Cameron 2001). Consequently, many different schools of thought on discourse analysis as method and theory have emerged. Cameron (2001: p. 11-12) describes a coarse division between the two primary definitions: first, discourse as 'language in use', standing in the tradition of linguistics; and secondly, discourse as 'practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak' (Foucault 1972: p. 49), centring on the power/knowledge nexus in social life.

The method of CDA is applied to uncover 'hidden agendas' (Cameron 2001: p. 123) and various layers of collective presuppositions, showing what can be said in certain social environments and the limits of what can be thought (Moses and Knutsen 2007: p. 218-219). Focusing on the role of language as a power resource in relation to ideology and socio-cultural change, CDA lends itself to this research design, since it is interdisciplinary (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999). It is "critical" because it looks at the (hidden) interconnection between language and elements of social life, it is committed to 'progressive social change' (Fairclough 2001: p. 230), and it has an emancipatory 'knowledge interest' (Habermas 1971). Another crucial aspect of CDA is its effort to analyse the 'order of discourse', with the intent to understand which discourses are either dominant/mainstream or marginal/oppositional (Fairclough 2001: p. 235), which properly suits the purpose of this study.

4.2. Research Limitations

Clearly, the conclusions from this small-scale research project are limited by its sample number, time, and space; thus, the conclusions do not claim to support larger generalisations.
Additionally, it is noted that the interviews were conducted almost exclusively in English and not in the native languages of the participants. Although all the interviewees were able to express themselves confidently in English, some of the Chinese individuals were less linguistically sophisticated. To counter this, parts of the interview were then continued in Mandarin, with the questions having been translated into Chinese prior to the interviews.

5. Competing Discourses and Interpretations of Mutual Relations

Following India's assertion of independence in 1947 and that of the PRC in 1949, the prevailing discourse on Sino-Indian relations in the early 1950s was 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' (Hindi for 'Indian and Chinese are Brothers') (Lal 2009: p. 41-42). The agreement on the famous five principles of

peaceful coexistence[12] clearly indicated communalities in the two nations' political attitudes (Siddiqi 2009: p. 61). However, the 1962 war dramatically worsened relations, largely due to the disputed border shared by China and India in the post-colonial era. The war ended with the defeat of the Indian forces. As a result, 'Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai' was cynically changed to a discourse of 'Hindi Chini Bye Bye' (Lal 2009: p. 42), indicating an intensified rivalry and the appearance of radical "othering" through an "enemy" image (Siddiqi 2009: p. 62).

The first half of the 1970s saw further souring of bilateral relations in response to the improvement of Chinese-Pakistani relations (and support in the 1971 war), China's active propaganda campaign against India, and the support of dissident groups within Indian territory (Goh 2006: p. 267). A number of high-level talks took place in the 1980s, laying the groundwork for bilateral meetings that were primarily concerned with a solution to the border issue (Goh 2006: p. 268). A joint press communiqué referred to 'peaceful and friendly' cooperation and propagated a non-violent solution to the border issue (Siddiqi 2009: p. 63).

A more determined diplomatic effort to improve the Sino-Indian relations was seen in the 1990s, with crucial meetings between high-ranking politicians.[13]

The early 2000s are generally viewed as another period of deepening relations, underscored by a multitude of mutual agreements and high-level talks (Goh 2006: p. 270-273). The 2010s, however, saw an increase of Indian troops at the Chinese-Indian border (International Institute for Strategic Studies 2016), and a two-month standoff at Doklam in 2017 led to renewed tensions, with China warning India not to repeat the mistakes of the 1962 war (Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Yan Shugang 2017). Eventually, both sides peacefully withdrew their troops (Mastro 2018: p. 140). Recently, the situation in Jammu and Kashmir has further complicated the bilateral relations, as is shown below.

5.2. Bilateral Problems and Security Issues

The 1962 Sino-Indian war and territorial issues deeply affected mutual perceptions and discourses. It has not been forgotten in India that China's armed forces marched into Indian territory despite

---

[12] The principles were as follows: (1) mutual respect for one another's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) non-interference in one another's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; and (5) peaceful coexistence (Mansingh 2007: p. 122).

[13] Among them are Chinese Premier Li Peng (1992), Indian President Ramaswami Venkataraman (1992), former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1993), and former Chinese President Jiang Zemin (1996).

Lukas Nagel

the 1954 Panchsheel agreement (Panda 2013: p. 687). The undeclared war ended with the defeat of the Indian troops, a face-loss for Nehru, and a strong blow to the young Indian nation – Manson calls it a 'humiliation' (2010: p. 86). Basharat Peer (2010) has noted that the 'memory of the 1962 war with China' and 'talk of the Chinese interference and aggression [is] everywhere'. For India, this event seems to fit the definition of a "chosen trauma", strongly remembered and embedded in collective memory.

The India-US/Sino-Pakistani security nexus concerns both sides. Since the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement, there has been a growing fear in the PRC that India could become an ally in a US-led coalition of democratic countries (a network running 'from Japan to India') in the area, threatening Chinese interests in the future (Krishnan 2010). Similarly, India is concerned by the Pakistan-China relations, which have emerged since Pakistan sought to establish better ties with the PRC in the 1960s (Siddiqi 2009: p. 60-72). The Indian public remembers with bitterness that China backed Pakistan in the 1965 Pakistani-Indian war (Goh 2006: p. 267). Almost half (45%) of all Indian citizens say they view Pakistan as the main threat to India, with only 6% citing China (Pew Research Center 2014a). In 2016, more than 40% of Indians saw China's influence in terms of territorial disputes and its relationship with Pakistan as 'very serious' (Pew Research Center 2016).

Which Country Is Greatest Ally/Threat?

Top choice (%)

Views in:	Ally	Threat
Bangladesh	U.S. (43%)	India (27%)
China	Russia (25)	U.S. (36)
India	U.S. (33)	Pakistan (45)
Indonesia	U.S. (28)	U.S. (25)
Japan	U.S. (62)	China (68)
Malaysia	China (27)	U.S. (26)
Pakistan	China (57)	U.S. (38)
Philippines	U.S. (83)	China (58)
South Korea	U.S. (68)	North Korea (36)
Thailand	U.S. (29)	Cambodia (11)
Vietnam	U.S. (30)	China (74)
U.S.	Britain (31)	Russia (23)

Rew Research Center (2014) Chapter 4: How Asians View Each Other, available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/

It is important to note that neither China nor India perceive one another as key threats. As shown in the table above, China sees the US as its primary opponent and India is most concerned with Pakistan (Pew Research Center 2014b). Therefore, it is an indirect threat perception due to being an ally of one's key competitor that renders the Sino-Indian relations so fundamentally complex.

The 2017 standoff between Chinese and Indian troops at Doklam can thus be explained as an effort by Beijing to contain an increasingly confident India and as a reaction by India intended to show strength in memory of the 1962 war (Panda 2017). Moreover, the 2019 withdrawal of special

rights in the Indian Union of Jammu and Kashmir Union by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resulted in an unheard reaction from the Chinese side, criticising 'human rights violations' (Malik 2019). One Chinese spokesperson argued that India giving special status to Ladakh 'challenged China's sovereign interests', which was immediately rejected by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), arguing that it was an internal affair and did not affect the line of actual control (LAC) with China (Rajagopalan 2019).

5.3. Ontological Security, Identity, and Othering

Depictions of India as poor and disorganised as a result of its immature democracy serves as a stark contrast and negative "other" for the PRC, with its self-image as a successful and orderly regime. Accordingly, most Chinese people fall back on a set of negative images and concepts when thinking about India, among them the disastrous living conditions of the lower castes and the defeat in the 1962 border war. China has undergone a variety of fundamental and often violent and traumatic[14] identity changes and has been described as an insecure actor with 'rigid basic trust', or low trust in multilateral agreements and with foreign nations (Krolikowski 2008: p. 117).

A culture of remembering national humiliation is essential to Chinese nationalism and encompasses the so-labelled "century of humiliation" (1839-1949), that began with the first Opium War (1839-1842).

The traumatic partition of Pakistan (1947) and the resulting extensive migration and communal violence set the conditions for a long-time antagonism between the two nations (Kinnvall and Svensson 2010: p. 276). Kinnvall (2004) argues that the Hindu-Muslim conflict is a defining 'chosen trauma' for India (p.755). Like China, India retains a crucial 'civilizational exceptionalism' in its biographical narrative and, therefore, its understanding of OS (Chacko 2014: p. 331). The fondness of the US for democratic India as a strategic partner also derives from India being an alternative to China, which is seen as a threat: 'India is the un-China' (Elliot 2006). To conclude, Guyot-Rechard (2019: p. 1) argues convincingly how the physical closeness between the two 'alternative political project[s]' leads to competitive, mirroring othering between China and India and the ambition to prove superiority over the other – which smoothly reconfirms theories from group psychology (e.g., Hogg 1992; Volkan 1997: p. 113; Murer 1999).

---

14 For a detailed debate on the importance of 'humiliation' in Chinese discourse, see: Callahan, W. (2004) National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism'. *Alternatives*. 29, 199–218.

Lukas Nagel

6. Dominant Discourses on Mutual Relations

Perceptions of power are crucial and shaped by leaders in both nations to project certain images (Johnston 2003). Foucault claims that language is power and that those who wield the ability to produce discourse have the power to make it "true" (Foucault 1980: p. 201). Even though it is often assumed that 'liberal-pluralistic' societies offer more space for open discussion and competing discourses (Panda 2013: p. 686-687), various studies in China show that Chinese nationalistic discourses are by no means uniform (Krolikowski 2008: p. 129).

6.1. Discourse on the State-level

Their undeniable similarities in history and demographics have meant that the Chinese Communist Party has, in the past, framed India as the "failed other", in a stark juxtaposition to its own system and identity, to legitimize its own rule (Huang 2005: p. 632). However, recent official government-level discourse has been predominantly and intentionally positive, using formulations that are almost identical to those of the late 1990s. The emphasis on historical and cultural parallels[15] has produced the neologism "Chindia" (China plus India), which is widely used in reference to the discourse of neoliberal cooperation (Panda 2013: p. 688). Neo-liberal ideas of economic interdependence and mutual complementarity are stressed, with both countries urged to 'deepen' their 'strategic mutual trust' (Embassy of the PRC 2014).

Jagannath Panda (2013) observes that both the economic and political elites in India have decided to engage with China (p. 687). While this engagement on the political level is described as "cautious", with the discourse of the "rise of China" widely acknowledged and unavoidable, the industry strongly stresses the economic opportunities. The term "Chindia" was first coined by Indian politician Jairam Ramesh to express the economic interdependence and argue that China is the "world factory" (agriculture, manufacturing), while India is the "world office" (IT, software, service industry). This promotes the belief that the nations' economies share a complementarity (Siddiqi 2009: p.72), an arguably flawed presupposition that is often quoted in academia (e.g., Sidhu and Yuan 2003; Siddiqi 2009; Sen 2018) and has recently been challenged.[16]

---

[15] In his 2018 book, Sen (p. 478) explains this focus on the state-level as follows: '[…] the civilisational narrative became a refugee for those seeking alternatives to the discourse of rivalry and conflict'.

[16] Pranab Bardhan, for example, challenges common 'myths' about China and India in his popular 'Awakening Giants. Feet of Clay' (2010); while Yasheng Huang argues in 'The myth of economic complementarity in Sino-Indian relations' (2011) that the complementarity is fantasy based upon political will and that the two economies are more competitive than complementary.

The official level currently refers to what has been termed a 'strategic and cooperative partnership', which includes economic ties and the intention to 'promote peace and development in Asia and the world as a whole', where there is enough 'space […] for the simultaneous development of India and China' (Indian Ministry of External Affairs 2015). Despite the re-emerging border issues, political leaders appear determined to maintain an optimistic message. 'China and India are opportunities, not a threat, to one another', Xi allegedly said during a meeting with Modi in June 2019, while Modi tweeted that the two should continue to strengthen their economic and cultural ties (Lee 2019). In contrast, the Chinese Ministry of Foreign affairs strongly criticised Modi's move in Jammu and Kashmir, opposing the incursion into India's territory and claiming that India has 'continued to undermine China's territorial sovereignty' (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2019).

6.2. Academia, Media, and Public Perception

It has been noted that the tendency in domestic Sino-Indian security analyses is hawkish and realist in nature, leading to biased and worst-case assumptions (Sidhu and Yuan 2003: p. 170). However, many Chinese scholars believe that India is inferior to the PRC, since it lacks the economic qualifications necessary for a great power and which they believe China to have. However, they also acknowledge that India is stronger in other areas, such as human rights and multilateral negotiations (Raman 2011: p. 348).

The majority of Indian academics and think-tanks are more sceptical and often depict the PRC as a security concern, especially when it comes to securing its borders. A strong focus by the Indian strategic community on the "China threat theory" prevails and has led to some fatalist prognoses (Manson 2010: p. 92). Paul (2018) argues that the 'rivalry is unlikely to end anytime soon' (p. 5) and concludes that ongoing Indian mistrust towards China is evident in the heightened military presence in the South China Sea and strategic partnerships with the US, Vietnam, and Japan. State-controlled media in the PRC have been increasingly influential, with anti-Indian coverage that is likely to signal the Chinese policy elite's scepticism towards friendly relations with India (Manson 2010: p. 97).
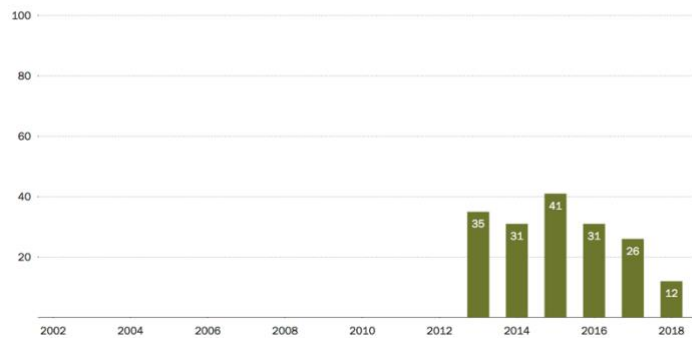
In 2013, Panda observed that the media in India was painting the PRC as a threat (Panda 2013: p. 687). India has recently focused on problems related to the Belt and Road (BRI) initiative and its geo-political significance (Sachdeva 2018), while External Affairs Minister Jaishankar has re-

Lukas Nagel

emphasized that India is concerned with the project due to questions of territorial integrity (ANI 2019). Anti-Chinese sentiments are routine, with some media drawing on nationalist concepts and requesting that New Delhi resist "imperialist" China and put pressure on it to guarantee a free Tibet (Manson 2010: p. 92). Recent media outlets in both countries often focus on the unsolved border issues, referring to
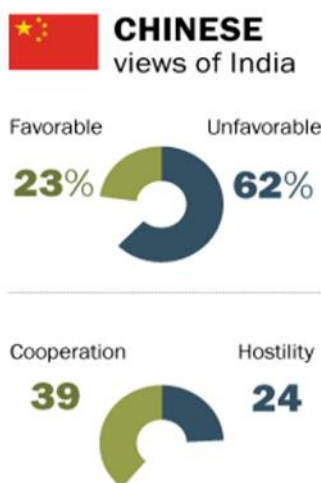
Opinion of China

Do you have a favorable or unfavorable view of China?

Percent of India responding Favorable, all years measured.   CHANGE RESPONSE ▾

Source: Pew Research Center (2017): Indian views of China. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2017/11/15/india-and-the-world/

1962 and recent clashes at the border in nationalist tones (Lintner 2018).

It is clear that the largely positive discourse at the state level has not won over the general population in either country. Mistrust and scepticism prevail, with views of Chinese and Indian people regarding one another being consistently negative. Furthermore, polls suggest that the Chinese public's threat perception of India is rising (Zhu 2009). A 2009 poll by the Global Times revealed that a startling 90% considered India a 'principal threat to Chinese security' (Zhu 2009).

Another survey from 2012 indicated that 62% of citizens had views of bilateral cooperation with India that were largely 'unfavourable', while 23% had primary 'favourable' perceptions. However, 39% saw Sino-Indian relations as cooperative and only 24% as hostile (Pew Research Center 2012).

India's discourse and policy approach on China has been inconsistent over the years under the rule of different political parties. Nonetheless, the predominant perception of China by Indian people seems to remain that of a 'competitor or rival' (Panda 2013: p. 686-687). According to an older Pew Research survey (2012), 44% of Indian citizens held an unfavourable view of China. Favourable views of China peaked in 2015, with 41%.

Source: Pew Research Center (2012) How the Chinese View other countries. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2012/10/16/how-the-chinese-view-other-countries/

There has since been a dramatic fall, reaching 26% in 2017 (Centre for Strategies and International Studies 2017) and just 12% in 2018 (Pew Research Center 2018).

7. Findings from the Interviews

7.1. Chinese "Othering" and Identity

Economic and career-related considerations were the primary reason for Chinese students coming to India. Of the 10 Chinese interviewees, four cited the lower Indian university fees as a reason for their decision, and five said that they hoped the experience would be beneficial for their future job prospects. Six students said the experience had been overall a positive one and had substantially enhanced their knowledge of Indian culture. Only one student claimed to have had predominantly negative experiences, and the remaining three students gave a somewhat mixed answer, without a clear position. For example, Ln. [17]compared it to a toxic relationship with a man:

> *'When I say I love India, it's half-half true. […] It's like love. Like,… because… you love him, so sometimes you are angry with him'.*

This may also explain why the students were very eager to describe Indians and the *positive Indian mentality*, rarely hesitating before voicing positive statements.

Three interviewees made positive mentions of Indian curiosity and pacifist behaviour, notably in Indian people's treatment of animals.[18] Among the most neutral and interpretable labels for India and its customs were "diverse" (5), "incredible" (5), "mysterious" (3), and "funny" (3). Most prominent was the diplomatic observation that India and China were very "different" (7). However, a majority of six said that they found India "polluted" and "dirty", four called it "poor", and seven said that "rape" was a big problem in India and they were concerned about women's safety, which left a negative impression.

Consequently, the Chinese students made ample usage of antithetic "othering". There were a number of adjectives that stood in direct contrast to the description of a Chinese identity. Ogilvie

---

[17] All names are abbreviated for privacy reasons.

[18] Rather entertaining were the personal anecdotes of some students regarding animals, usually cows, walking in the streets. They often related this to Indians' religiosity and pacifism, as well as the country's underdevelopment. The reactions ranged from amusement to shock, with Chan reporting: '[Then] the cow is walking in the road. It's very dangerous! … Once I saw an elephant on the highway – I was shocked!'

and Ashmore (1991) argue that the "self" and the "other" are often constructed through a juxtaposed 'symbiotic interdependence' (p.286). The Chinese students participating in this study frequently relied on these "dichotomies" (e.g. normal/abnormal; familiar/strange, and eventually us/"other") (Coleman 2013: p. 25). Both positive and negative stereotyping occurred. Initially, four students argued that Indian people were not materialistic, but genuinely spiritual or "religious" (6), while the same students complained that their fellow Chinese citizens thought only about money and possessions. Five contrasted Indian people as happy and Chinese as unhappy, which was often given as an explanation for Indians being satisfied with less. Among the most common dichotomies for Indians/Chinese was "chaotic" (3)/ "in order' (4), "unpunctual" (4)/ "punctual" (3), "slow" and "inefficient" (both 3)/ "efficient" (2), "reliable" (3)/ "unreliable" (4), and "lazy" (3)/ "hard-working" (7). Li said,

> *'[…] the society in India … they don't follow order. It's crowded and chaotic – luan![19] In China, you have regulations and people follow it or they will be punished'.*

Negative statements were often accompanied by ellipses and hesitations. This can be explained by the interviewees' awareness that those answers bore the risk of appearing xenophobic. Another strategy was that labelled by sociologist Erving Goffman (1981) as acting as a "relayer". In this strategy, negative stereotyping is attributed to others, thereby avoiding being personally related to the statement, while still being able to include it in one's own discourse, and thus signalling agreement (Cameron 2001: p. 149).
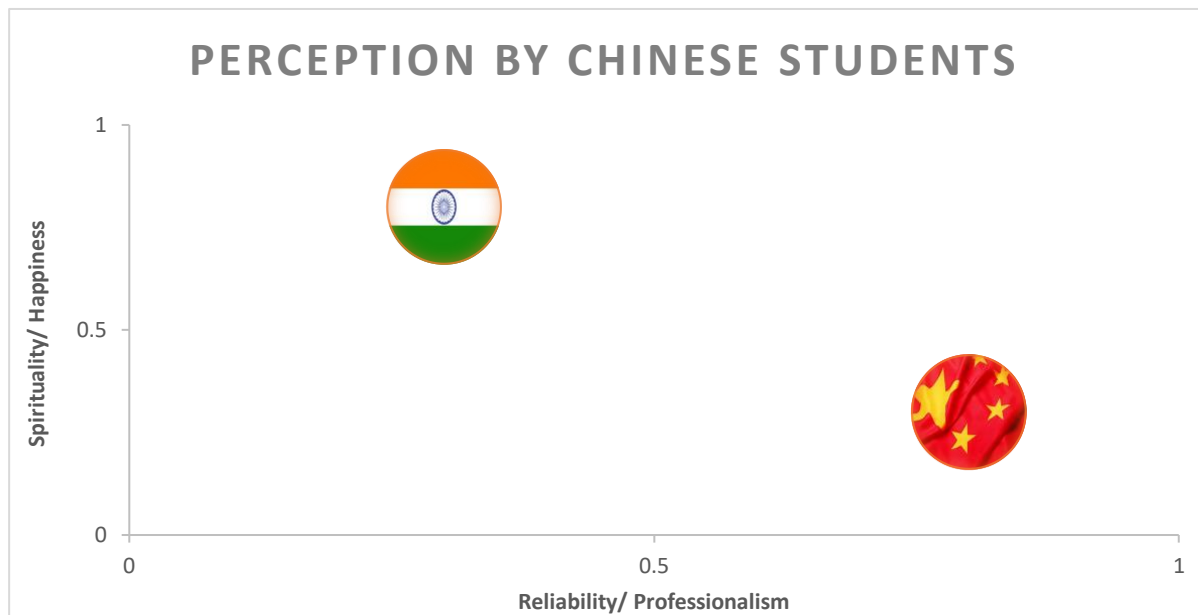
---

[19] 乱, Mandarin for chaotic.

Chart 1: Comparative spirituality perception based on data analysis of this study

The majority found Indians hospitable (7) but had also experienced bias and discrimination. Four reported Indian people being irritated by Chinese people coming to India to study, with two reporting that people "teased" them and argued that they were there because India was more developed than China. The students reported that it was common to be asked whether they knew Kung Fu or Jackie Chan (4).

The experience abroad had a certain impact on identity and political values. India's political system was perceived as ineffective and slowly developing, which seemed to reinforce an attachment to the "superior" Chinese authoritarianism. Impressions of the "ineffective" Indian mentality were transferred to the political and economic level and seen as intrinsically interlinked. Many expressed "disappointment" (8) regarding the infrastructure and transportation, which they frequently related to corruption.

Moreover, some students were clearly very sceptical of the notion of the Indian system as a genuine democracy, often contrasting it with the "original" model from the "West" or the "US". Xy. claimed that,

> 'Even Indians think their democracy is kind of wrong. It's not like the Western style. They are not so successful in democracy'.

Lukas Nagel

Five students defended the Chinese Communist party's authoritarianism and another six voiced a critical stance on Indian democracy and asserted their re-evaluation of the Chinese system. It was commonly said that 'India can learn from China'. Ln. said,

> 'Before I came here, I thought the Chinese government is bad, because we are not free. […] India now is like China before – they can grow faster. But the [Indian] government is not working, they just give show, but no funding'.

Interesting to note is that two students suggested a "combined" political system that intertwined the "best parts" of both, which indicates that the Indian system was both criticised and taken as inspiration. L. said,

> '[From my] point of view, I would like to combine [them] together because China needs democracy but India needs central power. […] To take advantage from both'.

7.2. Chinese Ontological Security

Some students stated that the PRC did not genuinely consider India to be an equal, saying that most Chinese citizens admired the "West". Accordingly, seven were surprised by the Indian "obsession with China" as a competitor and the remembrance of the 1962 border war, and they argued that Chinese nationalism was rather directed towards Japan (5) or the US (2). Bl., for example, said,

> '1962, the war between India and China. […] At the time, we never thought about India. We were looking at America. Also today, yes, we compare [ourselves] with America. But India always compare[s itself] to China… mostly [in terms] of [the] military.'

Xy. declared that,

> 'They feel more humiliation in their heart. They say they have been defeated by the Chinese'.

Ln. suggested an interesting analogy for the two nations:

'You know, [it is] like children. If you lose, you will really hate him. Next time, I will fight with him again, but I will win. Like that. They just always look at China. […] They train [their] army, because maybe one day we will have war between China and India'.

The interviews offered first indices for a 'chosen trauma' (Volkan 1997: p. 36) from the Chinese perspective. The Chinese interviewees gave strong evidence for a negative psychological recollection of the 1962 war experienced by their Indian acquaintances. A culture of remembering and the interest in discussing the matter with Chinese nationals seemed strange to them precisely because the PRC has moved on.

7.3. Chinese Perceptions of Bilateral Relations

To conclude, eight of the students said that the mutual perceptions was those of "friends", and most (7) held very optimistic views about the bilateral relations, expecting those in the future to be based on "cooperation". However, three students raised concerns about future conflicts ("war") between the two nations, and six argued that a solution of the border issue was crucial to ensuring continuing relations.

There was a very strong impression among the Chinese students of a fundamental lack of mutual knowledge (5). Seven stated that 'mutual understanding' and cultural exchange were important to protect future relations. Six were very critical of the Chinese media (C.: 'They cover rape, living conditions, the border issue, and air pollution'*) and* mentioned that the coverage on China in the Indian media saw an equally negative bias. Xy. said,

> *'[People] read a lot about India, the news in China on India [is] negative'.*

The neo-liberal notion of Sino-Indian economic complementarity was another concept deemed fundamental to explaining the bilateral relations. Four participants directly related to this, including Ln.:

> 'For manufacturing, we are good. […] But India is better for software. China needs India. […] They need each other, not fighting.'

There were strong references to a structural belief in a globalised, neo-liberal world and growing interdependence, a discourse very much in line with the agenda promoted at the state-level.

7.4. Indian "Othering" and the Impact on Individual Political Identity

The majority of Indian nationals were studying in the social sciences, most commonly Chinese language and culture. Their overall perceptions were very positive. All ten participants described their time in the PRC as "good" and eight said they would recommend the experience to their follow nationals. Some found Chinese people "humble" (3). The most prominently cited positive attributes were related to attitudes to work, with six arguing that the Chinese are very "hard-working", "disciplined" (3), and "punctual" (3).

On the negative side, there was an impression that Chinese people were racist and discriminated against foreigners (and even fellow nationals) on the basis of ethnicity, especially skin colour. Nami used ellipses to make a point which, paradoxically, ultimately made her sound somewhat racist herself:

> *'And … I don't know if that's appropriate to say or not, but they are a little… you know – they* <u>*discriminate!*</u>*'*

Closely related was the notion of seven students that Chinese were "self-centred" and "ignorant" of other cultures and nations (except for a number of 'Western, developed' countries) and thus chauvinistic. S. described them as "racist" and connected this with a cultural-historical argument:

> *'Chinese mentality is very similar to the name: Zhongguo [chin. 'China' or 'Middle Kingdom', 中国].* *They still have that mentality, that "We are the centre of everything"'.*

Five students described China as "obsessed" with the "West". As an example, F. referred to teachers in university classes giving examples:

> '[They] always start with the US. Always meiguo [chin. 'America', 美国]! When it comes to India, then they kind of feel a superiority complex'.

Antithetic "othering" did occur, but only to a limited degree. Five students described Chinese people as submissive and judged them as uncritical of hierarchies and authority, which some Indian students juxtaposed with their own people, who "questioned everything".

A notion remarked upon by both groups of interviewees was that Chinese people are very "materialistic", whereas Indians are more spiritual. Chinese/Indians were thus contrasted as "hard-working" (8)/ "lazy" (2), "disciplined" (4)/ "chaotic" (2), and "homogenous" (2)/

"heterogeneous" (2) by the Indian students, which was very much in line with the Chinese narration.

All ten interviewees were explicit that there was a fundamental lack of mutual knowledge and trust, especially among the "common people". Many blamed the negative media coverage in both countries and the censorship in China. Concerning the "average Indian", S. argued that,

> '…some of them view China as enemy only… because of the war or the conflict we had before in 1962. They think that they eat cockroaches and snakes and stuff'.

The students were not sure what to think about the "common Chinese" perception of India, as their personal experiences apparently often contradicted their other impressions:

> 'You know I feel that people in China really have little knowledge about India. They usually think about us – you know – enemies. Towards me, they were always good' (Nami).

During the interview, the students sought to construct a long tradition of mutual ties by referring to historical commonalities such as both countries being "ancient civilizations" (6) and their early contacts via Buddhism, but the differences were also prominent. The students had also had to cope with discrimination. V. had met Chinese people who had told her that India was an example of a "failed democracy":

> '"Democracy" – they always say 'hen luan, hen luan!' [chin. for 'chaotic', 乱]'

The interviewees' ethical and political values were apparently strongly undermined by the shock that many felt when they 'realized' the countries' respective differences in development and economic success. When asked about the biggest difference between China and India, S. exclaimed,

> 'The development! I think India would take another 30 years to reach that, frankly speaking!'

Eight students asserted that China was much more developed than India, with its people enjoying higher living standards. Some, like F., attempted to challenge the uncomfortable notion of the development gap by shifting focus to India's achievements in the category of social justice:

> 'GDP doesn't say [everything] about a country. Right now, there is also GNH [gross national happiness], so these things – freedoms, human rights, women's empowerment…'.

Despite some mocking the Chinese as submissive and uncritical of the CCP, five shared the view that 'India needs to learn from China'. Economic success on the national level was often explained, first, by reference to the diligence of the Chinese people. The second explanation was more complex and concerned the core of the political Indian identity as democratic and anti-authoritarian. Le. said that the Chinese just 'followed blindly', while Indians '[go] crazy about a single bad thing happening in [their] society', concluding cynically:

> *'Hey, possibly that's the reason why they have achieved […] so much [laughs]. Just doing what they are told [laughs].'*

Interestingly, this often resulted in the imagining of an alternative "combined" political system, based on democratic human rights but with a stronger, more authoritarian leadership. Most of the students were very hesitant to express these views, and they often used the "relayer" strategy (Cameron 2001: p. 149) to refer what were likely to be their own thoughts to others. Le., for example, claimed that,

> *'People think that there is a strong leader in power who can handle things better and that's kind of a good thing actually'.*

7.5. Ontological Security and the 1962 "Chosen Drama" of Indian Students

Su. said that most Indians viewed China extremely negatively and explained how his friends suspected him of being a China-obsessed 'panda-hugger':

> *'Most Indians would say they are "dragon-hunters". I'd, say, rather be a critical "panda-hugger"'.*

His statement hints at the juxtaposition of China and India's autobiographical selves at the state-level that explains their ambiguous relations and long-time attachments (Krolikowski 2008: p. 113-114). However, he suspected that most Indians viewed China as an enemy, thus his own liberal attitude and intercultural discourse alienated him from his friends, who shared a hostile discourse.

This reflects the paradox and confusion created by the competing discourses for many Indians from different social locations and political milieus. Strong evidence emerged during the interviews that the 1962 border war matched the definition of a "chosen trauma" (Volkan 1997: p. 36). All ten students referred to the conflict, often early in the interviews and before historical relations had been addressed:

> *'The 1962 war … that was a humiliation for India. […] Because presently, we are still [wrangling]*
> *with those issues' (Adya).*

All the students made it very clear that the war was strongly remembered in India and that it was the one issue that prevented a genuine political approximation. Many referred to the Indian 'defeat' as a strong 'humiliation' and observed an Indian 'obsession' with the conflict. Su. believed that,

> *'It's stuck in our minds and we refresh it every year through media or a new academic book. […]*
> *They love it. 'They' is the Indian street, the mainstream. They love the drama'.*

B. offered an almost "schoolbook" explanation for a "chosen trauma (or: drama)", when asked about the most important historical events:

> *'Of course, [the] 1962 war. [The] Indo-Sino war. It's not much of an issue, but Indians still*
> *remember the war. Chinese don't. I asked a lot of Chinese when I was in China – they did not*
> *know! […] I think it has to do with the losing side. The losing side always remembers!'*

7.6. Indian Discourse on Bilateral Relations

The general assessment of contemporary and future Sino-Indian ties was very optimistic. Nine of the ten interviewees voiced a belief in a steady improvement of the partnership on various levels, especially economic and political. However, many also expressed apprehensions, with B. referring to the current relations:

> *'… I mean political exchanges are growing, economic exchanges are growing, businesses are flourishing*
> *in both countries. […] I think that's pretty much it – it has not [reached] the cultural and people-to-*
> *people level yet'.*

Five students were optimistic about the "strong" Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi administrations and cooperation between them, expressing a hope that this would eventually solve the border issue.

Most of the Indian students referred to essential elements of the political and economic neo-liberal discourse propagated by the elites in the two countries: economic complementarity, deepening interdependence, and rational decision-making by state actors. This was often based on "first-hand experience" and, with this knowledge, a self-perceived rise in the social power axis, which gave the

students ("us", the "educated") the self-confidence to discredit the pessimistic discourse of the unknowledgeable "uneducated people" ("them"):

> *'Euh … the people who are not educated, they still consider China as a threat because of the war that we had with China. But the people who are educated, they know the value of China and the importance of Indio-China friendship…'*

Consequently, this strongly rejected a conflictual discourse and stressed cooperation, peace, mutual respect, trust, and Sino-Indian friendship (Ruddick 2001: p. 196).

8. Conclusion

The objective for this research was to question the degree to which Chinese and Indian students abroad conform with the dominant discursive formation of the contemporary Sino-Indian bilateral relations or differ from it to make sense of their intercultural experiences. The critical review of the history of the discursive formation in both nations of the postcolonial bilateral relations shows that it is dominated by two opposing bilateral discourses – namely, liberalism and realism. The opposing discourses appear to carry on and are still reflected in the contemporary academic cleavage (Goh 2006; Holslag 2010).

First, analysis of the discourse on the state level reconfirms the notion that it is overall positive, mostly emphasising economic cooperation and friendship. Interestingly, there are indications that this could be changing: while the statements made by the strong-men Xi and Modi at their occasional meetings remain positive, these appear to increasingly contradict the official stances of their respective foreign ministries.

Academia and media perceptions in both countries remain primarily nationalist and hawkish in nature, with a focus on unsolved historical and contemporary issues, specifically the unsolved border issues. This correlates with the lingering negative perceptions of the 'other' among citizens in both countries.

This analysis of interviews with exchange students from the two nations suggests that the overall discourse on bilateral relations operates within the dominant discursive formation. However, the collected qualitative data are certainly limited by the small number of interviews, the urban setting in which they took place, and the fact that perceptions are tangible and change over time. Moreover, the interviews were conducted primarily in English, which may have influenced the responses.

To summarize, the rhetoric was found to be very positive, idealistic, and associated with neo-liberalism, despite the occurrence of mutual and partially chauvinistic stereotyping. The students largely distanced themselves from the hostile notions of the realist camp, which they assigned to the populist media and the ignorance of the "uneducated" man and woman. However, frequent "antithetic othering" (hard-working/lazy; materialistic/spiritual; homogenous/diverse; disciplined/chaotic) worked on a binary basis (Ogilvie and Ashmore 1991; Coleman 2013) to allow the construction of the national self through the differentiation of the "other" on the basis of "identity markers" (Rumelili 2015).

Surprisingly, the majority of these attributes proposed generally positive notions of the Chinese "identity", something interviewees on both sides reproduced. One the one hand, this meant that the intercultural encounter and inevitable comparison was a strong blow to the feeling of Indian OS in relation to "Indian democracy", Indian identity and the state's autobiographical narrative in the anarchical and chaotic sphere of international relations (Delehanty and Steele 2009). On the other hand, the Chinese students were reassured by the (unsuccessful) "Indian (economic) experience", applying a rhetoric that reasserted their trust into the Chinese authoritarian system and discursively reproduced China as the superior brother who would gladly educate the disobedient sibling if he would only listen. This created a discourse that often verged on chauvinism.

However, a number of Indian students and some Chinese stressed India's progress in the fields of rule of law and political freedom. There was even the shared fantasy of a political hybrid model that would combine the strong Chinese leadership with Indian social rights.

Accordingly, the majority of the students in both nations constructed a highly elitist discourse on Sino-Indian mutual relations. It was striking how strongly both interview groups supplemented this largely economic discourse with a more "feminine" (Delehanty and Steele 2009; Ruddick 2001) and idealistic plea for intensified cultural exchange, interpersonal contact, stronger learning from and about each other, and restraint of biased media – all of which they regarded as crucial for meaningful improvement of bilateral ties.

While the number of exchange students between China and India is limited, it is growing. This small study suggests that these individuals' intercultural experiences and voices are in stark contrast

Lukas Nagel

to the negative discourse among the general public, replacing the notion of inexorable conflict with one of peace, cooperation, and trust. It might be suggested that cultural exchange and contact between the two nations decreases the potential for escalation and "othering".

This has potential for a positive change, especially if these young academics become "influencers" on various levels of society. However, this would require a dramatic increase in the numbers of exchange students and, therefore, political will to achieve this. However, with the escalation of the border issue, it is questionable if this will take shape, particularly as the positive discourse on the state-level might be at a crucial point of change and a change of leadership is expected in the near future.

References

Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA, Addison-Wesley.

Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, Verso.

ANI (2019) *India won't join BRI, it's concept won't apply to us: Jaishankar*. Ani News Agency. 4th October 2019. Available from: https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/india-wont-join-bri-its-concept-wont-apply-to-us-jaishankar20191004161140/ [Accessed on 13 November 2019].

Bardhan, P. (2010) *Awakening Giants. Feet of Clay*. Princeton University Press.

Barlow, F.K. Paolini, S., Pedersen, A., Hornsey, M.J., Radke, H.R., Harwood, J., Rubin, M. and Sibley, C.G., (2012) The contact caveat: Negative contact predicts increased prejudice more than positive contact predicts reduced prejudice. Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin. 38(12), 1629-1643.

Bauman, Z. (2003) *Liquid love*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Bhattacharya, A. (2019) India-China Relations: Putting the Record straight. *India Quarterly*. 75 (2), 62-268.

Burns, W. (2013) The Potential of Science Diasporas. *Science & Diplomacy*, 2 (4).

Billig, M. and Tajfel, H. (1973) Social categorization and similarity in intergroup behaviour. *European Journal of Social Psychology*. 3, 27–52.

Brown, L. and Holloway, I. (2008) The initial stage of the international sojourn: Excitement or culture shock? *British Journal of Guidance & Counselling*. 36(1), 33-49.

Callahan, W. (2004) National Insecurities: Humiliation, Salvation, and Chinese Nationalism'. *Alternatives*. 29, 199–218.

Cameron, D. (2001) *Working with Spoken Discourse*. California, Sage Publications.

Centre for East and Southeast Asian Studies (2015) *Guidelines for Master Thesis*. Revised version, 16th January.

Centre for Strategies & International Studies (2017) How are global views on China trending? Available from: https://chinapower.csis.org/global-views/ [Accessed on 8th October 2019].

Chacko, P. (2014) A New 'Special Relationship?' Power Transitions, Ontological Security, and India-US Relations. *International Studies Perspectives*. 15, 329-346.

Chouliaraki, L. and Fairclough, N. (1999) *Discourse in Late Modernity: Rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.

Coleman, J. A. (2013) Dymplexity: new theories, new contexts and new labels for mobile students. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*. 8 (1), 20-28.

Coleman, J. A. (1998) Evolving intercultural perceptions among university language learners in Europe. In: M. Byram and M. Fleming (eds.) *Foreign language learning in intercultural perspective*. Cambridge University Press, 45-75.

Croft, S. (2012) Constructing Ontological Insecurity: The Insecuritisation of Britain's Muslims. *Contemporary Security Policy*. 33 (2), 219–235.

Delehanty W. K. and B. L. Steele (2009) Engaging the narrative in ontological (in)security theory: insights from feminist IR. *Cambridge Review of International Affairs.* Routledge, 22 (3), 523-540.

Daily News and Analysis (2015) *PM Modi's Shanghai speech to be 'biggest Indian get-together in China.* 28th April 2015. Available from: http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-pm-modi-s-shanghai-speech-to-be-biggest-indian-get-together-in-china-2081572 [Accessed on 9th May 2015].

Elliot, M. (2006) *India Awakens.* Time. 18th June 2006. Available from: http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1205374,00.html (7.05.2015) [Accessed on 7th May 2015].

Embassy of India in Beijing (2019) *Education Relations.* Available from: https://www.eoibeijing.gov.in/education-relation.php [Accessed on 7th October 2019].

Embassy of the PRC (2014) *Xi Jinping Meets with President Pranab Mukherjee of India.* 19th September 2014. Available from: http://in.chineseembassy.org/eng/zt/xjp1/t1193337.htm [Accessed on 9th May 2015].

Fairclough, N. (2001) The Discourse of New Labour: Critical Discourse Analysis. In: Whetherell (eds.) *Discourse as Data.* Sage Publications. Chapter 6, 229 – 266.

Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Yan Shugang (2017) *Regular Press Conference, 6 Jul. 2017 [Waijiao bufayan ren geng shuang zhuchi li xing jizhe hui].* Ministry of Foreign Affairs. 6th July 2017. Available from: http://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/fyrbt_673021/jzhsl_673025/t1475878.shtml [Accessed on 9th August 2019].

Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/ Knowledge.* Brighton, Harvester.

Foucault, M. (1972) *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language.* New York, Pantheon.

Freeman, C. (2018) China's 'regionalism foreign policy' and China-India relations in South Asia. *Contemporary Politics.* Routledge, 24 (1), 81-97.

Giddens, A. (1991) *Modernity and Self-Identity.* New York, Polity Press.

Goffman, E. (1981) *Forms of talk.* Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press.

Goh, G. (2006) China and India: Towards Greater Cooperation and Exchange. *China: an International Journal.* NUS Press Pte Ltd, 4 (2), 263-284.

Guyot-Rechard, B. (2019) The fear of being compared: State-shadowing in the Himalayas, 1910–62. *Political Geography.* 75.

Guyot-Rechard, B. (2017) *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910–1962.* Delhi. Cambridge University Press.

Habermas, J. (1971) *Knowledge and Human Interest.* Boston, M.A., Beacon Press.

Hogg, M. (1992) *The social psychology of group cohesiveness: From attraction to social identity.* New York University Press.

Holslag, J. (2010) *China and India. Prospects for Peace.* Columbia University Press.

Huang, J. (2005): A New Chinese Discourse of India. *Journal of Contemporary China.* Routledge, 14 (45), 631-641.

Huang, Y. (2011) The myth of economic complementarity in Sino-Indian relations. *Journal of International Affairs.* 64 (2), 111-124.

Huysmans, J. (1998) Security! What do you mean? From concept to thick signifier. *European Journal of International Relations.* 4 (2), 226–255.

Indian Ministry of External Affairs (2015) *India and neighbours. China.* Available from: http://mea.gov.in/china-in.htm [Accessed on 9th May 2015].

International Institute for Strategic Studies (2016) Asia. in: *The Military Balance 2016.* London, Routledge.

Jackson, P. (2004) Forum Introduction: Is the State a Person? Why Should We Care? *Review of International Studies.* 30 (2), 255–58.

Johnston, A. I. (2003) Is China a Status Quo Power? *International Security.* 27 (4), 5-56.

Karim, M. and Islam, F. (2018) Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor: Challenges and prospects. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis.* 30 (2), 283-302.

Kim, Y.Y. (2001) *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and crosscultural Adaptation.* Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage.

Kinnvall, C. and Svensson, T. (2010) Hindu nationalism, diaspora politics and nation-building in India. *Australian Journal of International Affairs.* Routledge, 64 (3), 247-292.

Lukas Nagel

Kinnvall, C. (2007) Civilizations, neo-gandhianism and the Hindu self. In: Martin Hall and Patrick Jackson (eds.) *Civilizational identity: the production and reproduction of 'civilizations'.* International relations. New York, Palgrave, 95–108.

Kinnvall, C. (2004) Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security. *Political Psychology.* Blackwell Publishing, 25 (5), 741–767.

Krishnan, A. (2010) *Behind China's India Policy, A Growing debate.* The Hindu. 5th April 2010. Available from: http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/behind-chinas-india-policy-a-growing-debate/article744951.ece [Accessed on 28th April 2015].

Krolikowski, A. (2008) State Personhood in Ontological Security Theories of International Relations and Chinese Nationalism: A Sceptical View. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics.* Vol. 2 (1), 109–133.

Kumar N., Shah S. (2019) Future of India-China Relations: A Key Role to the Global Economy. In: Xu J., Ahmed S., Cooke F., Duca G. (eds.). *Proceedings of the Thirteenth International Conference on Management Science and Engineering Management.* Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, 1002.

Lal, V. (2009) Framing a Discourse: China and India in the Modern World. *Economic and Political Weekly.* 10th January 2009, 41-45.

Lamy, S. (2011) Neo-realism and neo-liberalism. In: Baylis, Smith and Owens (eds.) *The Globalization of World Politics.* Chapter 7. Oxford University Press.

Lee, J.-H. (2019) *China and India offer 'opportunities, not a threat, to one another' President Xi Jinping tells Prime Minister Narendra Modi.* South China Morning Post. 14th June 2019. Available from: https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3014498/china-and-india-are-opportunities-not-threat-one-another [Accessed on 25th August 2019].

Lintner, B. (2018) *China's India War: Collision Course on the Roof of the World*. New Delhi. Oxford University Press.

Ma, Y. and D. J. de Feo-Giet (2014) *Avoiding a Simplistic Comparison of India and China.* Available from: http://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/15/09/2014/avoiding-simplistic-comparison-india-and-china [Accessed 11th October 2014].

Malik, A. (2019) *Kashmir fallout: The three strands of India's diplomatic challenge',* Hindustan Times. 19th August 2019. Available from: https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/kashmir-fallout-the-three-strands-of-india-s-diplomatic-challenge/story-e6Rxhlo1uAt35ywhhmJ88H.html [Accessed 20th August 2019].

Mansingh, S. (2007) Rising China and Emergent India in the 21st Century: Friends or Rivals? *Korean Journal of Defence Analysis.* XIX (4), 117-142.

Manson, G. P. (2010) Contending Nationalisms: China and India March into the Twenty-First Century. *Asian Affairs: An American Review.* Taylor and Francis Group. 37, 85-100.

Mastro, O. S. (2018) It Takes Two to Tango: Autocratic underbalancing, regime legitimacy and China's responses to India's rise. *Journal of Strategic Studies.* 42 (1),114–152.

Meier, G. and H. Daniels (2011) Just not being able to make friends': social interaction during the year abroad in modern foreign language degrees. *Research Papers in Education.* Routledge, 28 (2), 212–238.

Migration Data Portal (2019) *Types of Migration. International Students.* Available from: https://migrationdataportal.org/themes/international-students [Accessed on 12th November 2019].

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC (2019) *Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hua Chunying's Remarks on the Indian Government's Announcement of the Establishment of the Ladakh Union Territory Which Involves Chinese Territory.* 6th August 2019. Available from: https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2535_665405/t1686549.shtml [Accessed 25th August 2019].

Mitzen, J. (2006) Ontological Security in World Politics: State Identity and the Security Dilemma. *European Journal of International Relations.* Sage Publications, 12 (3), 341–370.

Moline, N. (2009) International Studies Become Pilgrimages: Geography in a Multidiscipline Overseas Program. *Journal of Geography.* 108, 94–104.

Moses, J. and T. Knutsen (2007) *Ways of knowing.* Houndsmill, Palgrave Macmillan.

Murer, J. S. (1999) New approach to understanding nationalism and ethnic conflict: Adaptive cultural mourning. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology.* Amsterdam.

Ogilvie, D. M., and Ashmore, R. D. (1991) Self-with-other representation as a unit of analysis in self concept research. In: R. Curtis (eds.) *The relational self.* New York, Guilford, 282–314.

Panda, A. (2017) *What's Driving the India-China Standoff at Doklam?* The Diplomat Online. 18th July 2017. Available from: https://thediplomat.com/2017/07/whats-driving-the-india-china-standoff-at-doklam/ [Accessed 20th August 2019].

Panda, J. P. (2013) Competing Realities in China-India Multilateral Discourse: Asia's enduring power rivalry. *Journal of Contemporary China.* Routledge, 22 (8), 669-690.

Pathak, A. (1998) *Indian modernity: Contradictions, paradoxes, and possibilities.* New Delhi. Gyan Publishing House.

Paul, T. (eds.) (2018) *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era.* Georgetown University Press.

Peer, B. (2010) *Letter from New Delhi: Clash of the Tigers.* Foreign Affairs. 6th January 2010. Available from: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/features/letters-from/letter-from-new-delhi [Accessed 22nd April 2015].

Pettigrew, T. F., and Tropp, L. R. (2006) A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.* 90, 751–783.

Pew Research Center (2018) Global Indicators Database. Opinions of China. Spring 2018. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/database/indicator/24/country/in [Accessed 7th October 2019].

Pew Research Center (2016) Indians quite concerned about China. 15th September 2016. Available from: https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/09/19/india-and-modi-the-honeymoon-continues/pg_2016-09-19_india-06/ [Accessed 7th October 2019].

Pew Research Center (2014a) *Indians Reflect on Their Country & the World.* 31st March 2014. Available from: http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/03/31/indians-reflect-on-their-country-the-world/ [Accessed 8th May 2015].

Pew Research Center (2014b) *Chapter 4: How Asians View Each Other.* 14th July 2014. Available from: http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/ [Accessed 8th May 2015].

Pew Research Center (2012) *How the Chinese View Other Countries.* 16th October 2012. Available from: http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/10/16/how-the-chinese-view-other-countries/ [Accessed 8th May 2015].

Roy-Chaudhury, R. (2018) India's perspective towards China in their shared South Asian neighbourhood: cooperation versus competition. *Contemporary Politics.* Routledge, 24 (1), 98-112.

Rajagopalan, R. P. (2019) *Sino-Indian relations: Wuhan spirit under growing strain.* Observer Research Foundation. 20th August 2019. Available from: https://www.orfonline.org/research/sino-indian-relations-wuhan-spirit-under-growing-strain-54603/ [Accessed 12st August 2019] .

Raman, G. K. (2011) India in China's Foreign Policy. *China: an International Journal.* NUS Press Pte Ltd. 9 (2), 342-352.

Ratha, K and S. Mahapatra (2015) Recasting Sino-Indian Relations: Towards a Closer Development Partnership. Strategic Analysis. Routledge, 39 (6), 696–709.

Ruddick, S. (2001) Notes towards a feminist peace politics. In: Anne C. Herrmann and Abigail J. Stewart (eds.) *Theorizing feminism: parallel trends in the humanities and social sciences.* Boulder. Westview Press, 196–214.

Rumelili, B. (2015) Identity and desecuritisation: the pitfalls of conflating ontological and physical security. *Journal of International Relations and Development.* Macmillan Publishers. 18, 52-74.

Sachdeva, G. (2018) Indian perceptions of the Chinese Belt and Road initiative. *International Studies. 55* (4), 285-296.

Sen, T. (2018) *India, China, and the World: A Connected History.* New Delhi. Oxford University Press.

Siddiqi, F. H. (2009) India-China Relations in the 21st Century: Impact on Regional and Global Politics. *Pakistan Horizon.* Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, 59-72.

Sidhu, S. and J. Yuan (2003) *China and India. Cooperation or Conflict?* Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Snow, E. (1944) Foreword. In: D. K. Karaka (eds.) *Chungking Diary.* Bombay.

Steele, B. J. (2008) *Ontological Security in International Relations: Self-Identity and the IR State.* New York, Routledge.

Steele, B. J. (2005) Ontological Security and the Power of Self-identity: British Neutrality and the American Civil War. *Review of International Studies.* 31 (3), 519–540.

Lukas Nagel

The Economic Times (2019) *China approves teaching of MBBS in English to 45 colleges amid big surge of students from India.* 7th October 2019. Available from: https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/china-restricts-teaching-of-mbbs-in-english-to-45-colleges-amid-big-surge-of-students-from-india/articleshow/71482435.cms?from=mdr [Accessed on 12th November 2019].

UNESCO (2019) *International students. Glossary.* Available from: http://uis.unesco.org/en/glossary-term/international-or-internationally-mobile-students [Accessed on 12th November 2019].

Volkan, V. (1997) *Bloodlines: From ethnic pride to ethnic terrorism.* Boulder, Westview.

Wang, K., Heppner, P., Wang, L. & Zhu, F. (2015). Cultural intelligence trajectories in new international students: Implications for the development of cross-cultural competence. *International Perspectives in Psychology: Research, Practice, Consultation.* 4. 51-65.

Ward, C., Bochner, S., and Furnham, A. (2001) *The psychology of culture shock.* Hove. Routledge.

Weinar, A. (2010) Instrumentalising diasporas for development: International and European policy discourses. In: Bauböck, R. and Faist, T. (eds.). *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods.* Amsterdam University Press, 73–89.

Wetherell, M. (2001) Debates in discourse research. In: Wetherell, M., Tailor, S. and Yates, S. (eds.) *Discourse Theory and Practice: A Reader.* London. Sage in Association with the Open University.

Zhu S. (2009) *90% in online poll believe India threatens China's security.* Global Times. 11th June 2009. Available from: http://www.globaltimes.cn/china/top-photo/2009-06/436320.html [Accessed 4th April 2015].

J C M

№ 3

LUKAS NAGEL

BIO

Lukas Nagel is currently working as a civil peace worker for 'World Peace Service' (WFD e.V.) in a conflict zone in northern Myanmar where he does research on social cohesion and teaches politics in a community school. Prior to that he received his B.A. in Chinese Studies and Politics from Free University in Berlin and a M.A. in Asian Studies from Lund University. His research interests are concerned with nationalism, identity politics, bilateral relations in Asia and conflict resolution. He worked as consultant in China, Philippines and Kenya for Transparency International (TI) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on land corruption, workers' rights and gender equality.