

Sino-Indian Relations: Reliving the Past?

President Jiang Zemin blamed India for increasing tensions in South Asia. And when Islamabad exploded its nuclear devices Chinese reactions to it had been one of regrets only.

WHEN India conducted its underground nuclear tests on May 11 and 13, 1998, there were justifiable apprehensions about a possible revival of Sino-Indian acrimony. Sino-Indian relations have had its ups and downs, more downs than ups, so to speak. The brief *Friendship of Peace* pact signed in 1950 and the *Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence* signed in 1962. The situation stalemated during the post-1962 period; relations between the two countries remained cool with periodic border skirmishes and minor diplomatic protests.

But then it began to improve since early 1980s beginning with upgrading of diplomatic relations to ambassador level and subsequent initiative of a process of negotiations through talks. This led to Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's visit to Beijing in 1988. Since then there have been qualitative changes in Sino-Indian relations. Both countries have concluded a limited border agreement. There has been high level exchange of visits and all indicators were pointed towards better and improved relations between the two Asian giants.

But recent development i.e. depicting China, as 'enemy number one' for whom India needed to go nuclear, would certainly have some repercussions on the strategic thinking in Beijing. The development has forced Beijing to reappraise its decades-old alliance with Pakistan, a 10-year effort to better Indian relations, and recent commitments to combat nuclear nonproliferation and not to test nuclear warheads. While appraising its South Asian policy, Beijing has warned New Delhi that it would forego its policy to improve ties with India if its leaders keep demonizing China as the region's real threat. And with an increase of nearly two decades Chinese Foreign Ministry also accused New Delhi of seeking 'hegemony' in the region by using its nuclear card. China usu-

ally reserves the word 'hegemony' for enemy countries. Naturally questions have been raised about the likely policy options Beijing is going to adopt with regard to India. Will they begin reliving their past? Or would there be a new and altered relationship between the two?

During the first three decades of China's independence its South Asian policy had been greatly motivated from its perceived threats of encirclement from the South, initially through Western alliance system led by U.S. imperialism, and subsequently by cooperation between Soviet revisionists and U.S. imperialists. It is this fear of encirclement and closing in its southern border through the regional proxies that South Asia and Indian Ocean emerged to be of vital strategic importance in its defense and counter-encirclement policy. At the initial stage the policy had been ad hoc and incremental.

Its initial attempt was to forge an informal alliance with India, which was reciprocated by the latter. There were no dearths of goodwill between the two. When China emerged as an independent country in 1949, after centuries of western domination, and rose like a phoenix from the ashes of years of civil war, there were great enthusiasm among the Afro-Asian countries. Those were the days of non-alignment movement, Afro-Asian solidarity and Afro-Asian conferences. India and China even with different ideological and socio-economic systems moved towards a closer relationship. Prime Minister Nehru welcomed China's emergence as the greatest event in Asia's history while Chairman Mao despite his declaration that there were only two camps—so-called Socialist and Imperialist—and no such camp as

Non-Aligned one of which Nehru was the champion, Sino-Indian closer relationship was formalized through the agreement of 1950. But contest for Asia's leadership was to act as a catalyst in testing their so-called *Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai* relationship.

As the relationship with India soured following the Sino-Indian war of 1962 it shifted its attention to Pakistan which has emerged to be its strongest regional ally. The underlying factors such as Beijing's bitter rift with erstwhile Soviet Union and its perceived threats from the latter prompted it to adopt a policy to maintain a precarious balance between India and Pakistan

between India China compelled Beijing to maintain similar policy options with a certain nuance toward normalization with India. The linchpin of this process has been Beijing's efforts to have a stable relationship with India without, however, abandoning Islamabad. Such policy calls for not only strategic understanding between China and India but also between New Delhi and Islamabad. Only then defense of its southern flank seemed plausible. Obviously the natural corollary has been to encourage Pakistan to resolve its outstanding bilateral issues including Kashmir peacefully and through dialogue. Reduced regional tensions and a stable

ally lumbering foreign policy establishment like an atomic shock wave. Since the incident drastically altered the regional strategic balance, something Beijing is not yet ready to accept, it called for policy appraisal.

The altered policy, as such, has been a combination of continued policy of maintaining a balance of power but at the same time not overtly getting involved into subcontinental affairs. And by helping any apprehensions Chinese policy makers demonstrated prudence and preferred to act as a responsible international actor instead of going alone policy. Its reactions came three days after the Indian explosions and after criticizing New Delhi strongly for destabilizing the region, it urged international community to restrain the former from entering into a dangerous arms race. Further evidence of Beijing's role as an emergent international actor was forthcoming when President Jiang Zemin told Agence France-Press chairman Jean Miot that Beijing would not resume any retaliatory nuclear testing i.e. it would be abided by its nonproliferation commitments.

However, after demonstrating its international obligations, it is back as a balancer in regional security concerns no matter how reluctantly. President Jiang Zemin in the same meeting blamed India for increasing tensions in South Asia. And when Islamabad exploded its nuclear devices its reactions to it had been one of regrets only. Implicit in this development is the fact that Beijing's alleged refusal of a nuclear umbrella to Islamabad when its foreign secretary made a dashing visit to China made latter's nuclear testing a *fait accompli* something for which former had a sympathetic un-



Dilara Chowdhury

and prevent the emergence of India-controlled South Asia in its order to preclude Soviet penetration into the subcontinent. It thus aided Pakistan with military, diplomatic and moral support. It even demonstrated its willingness to intervene in case Pakistan's territorial integrity and very survival were at stakes as it did during the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965. As such alliance with Pakistan and its sophisticated multi-faceted policy of developing friendly relations with other South Asian states have all been to maintain balance of power in the region.

But with even the disintegration of Soviet Union and consequent decline of Soviet hegemony the inherent rivalry and mutual suspicions

South Asia help Beijing diverting its limited resources for its other pressing requirements like its economic and military modernization. As such Beijing has been an enthusiastic supporter of the initiatives for the establishment of regional security regimes and cooperation arrangements. In line of the same thinking Beijing has given unmitigated support for SAARC.

Isn't it not then discernible why Beijing reacted so strongly to India's nuclear explosions and its recent demonstration of China? A destabilized South Asia and the revival of its enemy image in India have been too upsetting for Beijing. India's nuclear tests, as one Chinese foreign policy expert pointed, 'rattled through Beijing's nor-

Of Sychophants and Stooges

by Kazi Alauddin Ahmed

We wish Sheikh Hasina be cautious on all proposals for favour, more intently when they relate to her family members or near relations. She must remove the haze that is mischievously clouding the commitment to transparency that she started with.

Don't Take the People for Fools

Trying to obstruct the opposition parties' motorized long march was undemocratic, contrary to the promise of AL chief and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and opposed to the norms and practices of rule of law. We clearly and unambiguously condemn the setting up of road blocs by the ruling party workers and supporters. By this act the ruling party has given rise to the following three questions in the public mind: that regardless of what it says in public AL does not believe in allowing the opposition its democratic rights; that even when the chief herself gives an assurance it is not credible; and finally that the AL will do anything, even break the law (blocking a highway is nothing short of breaking the law), to harass the opposition. As a result what would otherwise have been a 24-hour event and one of limited political significance has now been turned into a something far larger with greater political repercussions and impact on the public mind.

We also find the AL's attempt to blame the road blocks on BNP's factionalism as nothing less than laughable. Our report on how the barricades were put up clearly points out its premeditated and organised nature and also gives a fair indication as to the people responsible for it. Another issue of equal significance is the blow to the credibility of the person and the office of the Prime Minister. She made a public statement that the opposition's so-called long march will not be hindered and that she will leave it to the people to judge whether such a march was good for the country or not. Now that it is clear that her party cadres and supporters set up the barricades where does Sheikh Hasina's personal credibility stand? What were two AL MPs doing on the barricaded roads but trying to incite the people to oppose the so-called long marchers? Yes, we understand that the ruling party also has its right to make counter propaganda about the event, but to do so on the very route of the long march itself constitutes nothing less than provocation for trouble. The PM had said her party would not obstruct the march. How can that be reconciled with the activities of many AL leaders, especially of the two MPs who participated in the barricade?

As we had stated several times in this column that the opposition be allowed to do its thing and let the people judge who is right and who is wrong. As the AL never tires in claiming that people are behind the CHT Treaty, then what is there to be worried about. Let the opposition make its case in whatever lawful form it can. We hope we see no repetition of yesterday's events in the future.

Regional Atmosphere

The sense of relief is as benign as it is pervasive. Despite speculations to the contrary that nuclear tests by India and Pakistan might have wrecked the prospects for Colombo SAARC Summit, the much-coveted event seems firmly on course. Definite dates have been announced for it—July 20-22, to be precise—albeit in consultation with heads of government and state of the SAARC countries. India has officially confirmed that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee would attend the Summit. Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif is all set to do likewise as confirmed by the country's Foreign Minister Gohar Ayub. Gohar has also strongly indicated that Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan are to meet on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit with much more than customary importance being attached to such an encounter this time round. For one thing, this will be their first person-to-person interaction not only since their induction into power but also after the nuclear tests which gave a new meaning to Indo-Pak equations. For the other, this is going to happen against the backdrop of expressed willingness on both sides to re-start the dialogue in what we deem to be a highly charged political milieu. They have on the agenda nuclear situation and Kashmir.

While the region turns to Colombo summit for a sustenance of the economic cooperation process and, very importantly, for a de-escalation of tensions rising in South Asia since the atomic tests, mediatory efforts of smaller countries to bring India and Pakistan closer should also be welcomed. Vajpayee has offered Sheikh Hasina who has ventured to help ease the tension that he would be 'happy to receive her shortly'. A positive response is also likely from Islamabad.

BBC World Service reported that Balbir Singh, an alleged Indian spy arrested some seven years ago in Pakistan has been executed by the authorities there. Pakistan had also seen the hand of India in the plane hijack incident and accused Indian intelligence of planting a bomb in a train which met with an accident the other day. These are not part of good atmospherics, such niggling things are better avoided.

Out Two-strokes

Wednesday's press reported Sonali Bank as 'suspending' a loan it had approved to an autorickshaw drivers' co-op for importing 5,000 three-wheelers. Sonali Bank's was a part of a Tk 50-crore loan the co-op wanted to raise from a consortium of four banks. But our confidence in the top men of our top banks have been rudely shaken by first, their flouting of a specific and unambiguous ban on loans to defaulters and then giving a damn to the environmental concerns of the society and the state. That for them to withdraw from supporting the import only under pressure from press, will remain a scandalous scar on the banking history of this nation.

With the same emphasis we want the government to immediately ban import of leaded petroleum. Otherwise the action against the three-wheelers will be reduced to a silly and fruitless exercise. Even after a foolproof halt to the entry of new two-stroke autos, 30 thousand of such machines will continue to screen out sunlight and poison the lungs in Dhaka. We must take up a programme of seeing the last of these machines not only in Dhaka but in the whole of Bangladesh—in five years.

What kind of vehicles may fill in the void created by the autorickshaw exit? Maybe autos powered by four-stroke engines, maybe more innovations like the maxis. And more and more city buses, to be sure. Let all genuine drivers of the autos get the first preference in the huge recruitment of the new vehicles will need.

SYCHOPHANTCY and flattery are though synonymous the former is more vicious and obtrusive than the latter. Both however, have the notoriety of being a devastating art to beguile the mental up-keeping of the subject. Even the known hard-hearted person, openly detesting infatuation or cajoling of any kind can be trapped in the snare. His pretentious firmness to withstand the uncouth ramblings of a sychophant, can soon vanish in the thin air in an unguarded moment. He fails to realize that a treacherous act is being played on him. When he does have the realization the damage shall have been done already and there is no way to retract. Indeed it turns out to be a very costly gambit beyond repair.

And again sychophantcy is a pseudonym for pampering human ego. It is a conscious bid to stir up the inner mind of one who is otherwise forbidden by a sense of insecurity within and hence cannot freely express himself about many an inner urge. Silently he looks for a window and the sychophant around instantly seizes the chance in unmistakable manner. Sometimes he succeeds and sometimes he doesn't at the first venture. Nevertheless, he just keeps his eyes fixed on his target and awaits weaker moments to reap the projected dividend.

Stooges are yet another peculiar type of sychophant. But in their cases the element of wit plays a concurrent role with flattery. The legendary 'Gopal Bhar' in the court of Maharaja Krishna Chandra of Krishnanagar, Nadia. This little plump pumpkin-like creature with his protruding or rather, bulging tummy shall at once rouse laughter for his clownish countenance. However, when he is seen in discourse with any other human being of his time,

we find an unending reservoir of both subtle and blunt witicism. The Maharaja enjoys his company so much that after every single feat of wit, fine or grossly uncouth, he dispenses rewards to the stooge. Gopal flourishes with Maharaja's lavish patronage.

Gopal Bhar's counterpart in Turkey, Nasiruddin Hodja is more philosophic than the Indian. He seems to have been enjoying his subtle anecdotes that, at times, send the beholders to their wit's end. Hodja presents a sort of regality inspite of his very humble living. He lives in the hearts of people around without longing for any patronage from Royal palaces or aristocratic forts.

Practically, the aforementioned two legendary figures, despite their being assigned to century-old history, do, even to this day, keep on entertaining the readers. Their innocent skits of yonder years send ripples of laughter through the minds of young and old alike. So harmless they have been that they will remain in the human memory indelibly forever.

Sychophants of our time, on the contrary, belong to a totally different specie. They do not possess the finesse of their historical precursors, rather, they thrive on crude and often vulgar action and expression. Barring those in the social scenario, the ones in the political arena have proved themselves so obtrusive and vicious as would beggar any description. Playing on human ego has been their most rewarding pastime. Their tools of operation have been taking ad-

vantage of the intellectual shortcomings, lack of knowledge, known state of hardship financially, innate urge to build fortune while in power. There is yet another group who derives delectable pleasure in misleading others by way of subtle pampering and beating up the emotions of the target.

Both in bureaucracy and political leadership sychophants are ever active. They often reap dividends at big stakes sharing the booties with the dispensers of out of the way favours. Sometimes, they enjoy exclusive gains when the sources of such favours are averse to any unearned income. But they allow themselves to be freely used and are often cajoled into action. Their number is however, too small to be reckoned with.

It is true though said that the large-hearted father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was surrounded by many a sychophant, precisely, some touts who used to boast of the credit to get anything done from the great leader. In Pakistan days Ayub Khan enjoyed the boot-licking of Abdul Monem Khan who could go to any extent to please his 'Hujoor' and thus earned the infamy of a legendary stooge of the lowest order. By nature Sheikh Mujib was a very open-hearted person and ever-sympathetic with anybody having genuine or fake pleas of being economically handicapped. And whosoever could play with his emotions were seen to have achieved their material goals at ease. In spite of his being incorruptible in the truest sense of the term, so-called inner circle

could obtain favours born of his innocence. Simple and unsuspecting as he was, Bangabandhu could have been trapped into many a mischievous act by a number of people around him. His difference with the versatile Tajuddin Ahmed was the result of the shrewd contrivance of some leaders of Awami League whom Mr Tajuddin seldom liked. This was practically the most malevolent damage done to the image of the great leader beyond repair.

The sychophants played their subtle role to create a life-long disaffection between the two closest leaders. It is conceivable how Mr Tajuddin Ahmed was distanced from Bangabandhu and who was the main contriver to play one against the other though the sychophants around the great Sheikh Mujib. It is unlikely one may imagine that the 'Chanakya' (the legendary shrewd diplomat) was Khondker Mustaque and his confidants may be Shah Muzammil, K M Obaidur Rahman, Taheruddin Thakur and a few others. Their subsequent joining hands with Mushatque in his Democratic League bear some testimony of this contention.

I presume that the people of the country who had been longing for a change received Awami League Government as a welcome augury. The maiden speeches of the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also squarely echoed public sentiments. Her commitments to the people and their fulfillment in phases had been expected. She started so very well that it created lot of enthusiasm. Her open declara-

tion, 'I have lost everything and I have nothing more to have excepting the love of the people...' was though born of the hideous tragedy of August 15, 1975 and naturally surcharged by human emotionality invoked tremendous public sympathies. She was fully poised and composed to go by her words.

But perhaps the sychophants soon reactivated themselves to have the worst out of her emotions to which she appears to have been getting gradually subservient. The flair of her intellect, precisely her wisdom at the initial days seems to have been losing the sharp edge and being blunted. The naming or renaming of a number of public institutions besides after Bangabandhu, her mother and even after her own name behoves literal replication of similar stale gambles of her predecessor governments. And more pitifully, the name of the other of the nation, his title 'Bangabandhu' is being so freely used even for a super market, is considered more defiling the image of the leader. His return from Pakistani jail on 10th January, 1972 was indeed an auspicious day for our jubilation and when the return of his daughter to Bangladesh from abroad is celebrated ceremoniously today the importance of the first one is automatically lost to an extent in my estimation. Still then, she has been pampered into accepting the civic reception and profuse ovation by the speakers. Momentarily she appeared to have forgotten Bangabandhu's day of return allowing that people an unsavoury opportunity to com-

pare the two events. Palpably, such ridiculous incidence has been the crude manipulations of the sychophants around.

I do not know why the ceremonial felicitation of Sheikh Hasina on the floor of Jatiya Sangsad in the last session appeared to me again an intemperate attempt at deflating her otherwise serene image in the public mind. I would rather let her remain ever glowing in our memories by her good deeds—not by the unsolicited infatuation of the stooges around.

Another recent news in a vernacular daily has been distressing to me. It was about a possible return of an ex-Awami League now a BNP leader, to fill in a cabinet minister's position. The intriguing news gave an impression that a hectic lobbying was on (allegedly at family level) to get him back on condition that he would get a slot in the cabinet as a full minister. This is ridiculous and is most likely to damage the moral of many other self-less workers in the party having no relation with any particular 'family'. A 'deserter' is a 'deserter' for all times and there cannot be any earthly reason for giving such an unusual deal to his advantage. We recall that in the matter of giving nomination to 15 seats there had been a lot of row over certain act of 'favouritism' to relations excluding old, dedicated party workers/leaders.

We remember how Bangabandhu did once sharply react to some suggestions of a number of flatterers feigning his well-wishers and how he expressed his hatred... We wish Sheikh Hasina be cautious on all proposals for favour, more intently when they relate to her family members or near relations. She must remove the haze that is mischievously clouding the commitment to transparency that she started with.

To the Editor...

A high-way code

Sir, I feel that you have been quick to readily thank the government for introduction of 2000 taxis. Actually, what is long awaited and urgently needed is not taxis but some sort of semblance of discipline and traffic order on the roads. We desperately need a clear high-way code of conduct and vigorous enforcement of it without any fear or favour.

Aator Aali
USA

Rapes on the rise!

Sir, A weekly in its editorial specified the reasons for rise in rape cases. Unfortunately and wrongly, it was written: 'first among the many reasons is the closure of the red-light areas and societies intolerance of prostitution...' I just wonder and feel hurt for such writing as it is very unjustified, immoral, very unethical and far beyond the great causes. In our country, for the last few months, reported rape cases are about 150 or so. So establishment of brothels will not solve problem of rapes. I think, to reduce the increase in rapes, apart from serious police activity, we must reject all types of pornography. Production of cinemas of Bangladesh now are full of sexy items. Most of the dailies frequently publish rubbish pictures of actresses, models of local and foreign countries. It is no doubt a violation

of section of Bangladesh Penal Code.292. So stop pornography everywhere in the country.

Nilmilonota
Dhaka

Monitoring of S Asia

Sir, The recent atomic tests in India and Pakistan might help the big powers to establish a legitimate foothold in South Asia for monitoring and providing security feelers to smaller nations (SOFA was an early warning?).

The two strategically located small countries are Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. The former is already under strife for more than a decade, for other reasons more than openly admitted (the strategic location of SL is ideal on a global perspective). The other alternative site is now Bangladesh—openly. She is an ideal site for monitoring India, China, and Myanmar—for obvious reasons. According to western strategy, India and China have to be kept alive in a balancing act. It is unbelievable that the CIA did not know what was going on in the Rajasthan desert.

Perhaps Pakistan is the world's first Islamic nation to have the nuclear or atomic warfare capability; an uncomfortable thought, considering that Islam is now the world's second largest religion, after the white man's current domination. The potentiality cannot be glossed

over; even after realising that the nations possessing the nuclear warheads are sitting over judgement and dictating the global policy to the researchers. Someone asked a relevant question why the first atom bombs were not dropped over Nazi Germany, rather than on Japan in Asia.

A lot of international politics is discernible over the gas exploration and power generation tender offers; which now appear to be more tough than initially anticipated. The bids are biting, depending on the angle of the viewpoint. The super-powers are showing unusual interest in anything under pressure below the surface, and specially anything which has to do something with energy.

Ironically (or is it atomically?) we can say that Bangladesh has come of age!

A Husnain
Dhaka

"Equating India..."

Sir, I have the pleasure to read the excellent write-up by Kuldip Nayar appearing in The Daily Star of 27th May '98—'Equating India with BJP-led coalition'. Kuldip is an eminent journalist of this sub-continent and his in-depth analysis of BJP versus Indian secularism is transparent but he did not elaborate as to why the 'resh bhagat' Vajpayee joined his hand with 'ram bhagat' Advani? Vajpayee

was once the Foreign Minister of India and was held in high esteem by many. Perhaps he forgot the idiom 'if you eat the cake you won't have it any more'.

Kuldip has raised another important question—do the hooligans who razed Babri Masjid to the ground represent the entire Hindu community? I wish not; but the fact that BJP clinched 180 seats in Lok Sabha this time instead of only 8 seats in the past speaks a different story.

The other interesting quotation of Mohammad Ali Jinnah as quoted by Kuldip is "... in course of time Hindus would cease to be Hindus and Muslims not in the religious sense because that is the personal faith of every individual but in the political sense as citizen of the state."

If Jinnah admitted that religion is a personal faith then why did he raise the useless two-nation theory and created a truncated Pakistan uprooting millions of people from one part of the then India and migrating to another part of that country? The theory was further proved to be baseless with the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent state at the cost of thirty million lives most of whom were Muslims. Even in the existing Pakistan the Panjab is ruled supreme.

Kuldip has further tried to funnel through his article that fundamentalists are there in

India as well as in Pakistan. Let me draw the circle a little bit bigger. Fundamentalists are also in Algiers, in Egypt, in Turkey, in Afghanistan and in many more countries of the globe. Their activities must be curbed with an iron hand failing which neither India will remain India any more nor Pakistan will remain Pakistan. I wish both the countries will correctly read the writings on the wall for their own sake.

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Cop corruption

Sir, I have come to know through the Internet edition of the DS that the Home Minister Mr. Rafiqul Islam has asked the police officers to keep record of the people who lobby for a case. Mr. Islam is a brave freedom fighter, efficient administrator and above all an honest and sincere man. I have no doubt in my mind about his sincerity in combating crime but I think that asking the police to report about "so-called lobbyist" is a mistake. Police itself is a great problem for the people of Bangladesh. Their glorious past of fighting for country's independence is overshadowed by killing, rapes, corruption and political witchhunt. The U.S. Country report has rightly underscored the police of Bangladesh as an instrument of oppression.

When police arrest an innocent person and torture him in the police station, his relatives are bound to lobby for his release. It is an open secret that police demand and take bribes with the promise of not to beat the accused. Lobbying does not always mean influence peddling to save a criminal. In most cases it is quite opposite.

Unless and until the police force is brought under a partisan-free 'Civil Police Commission' to oversee its activities, the police will report the people more in the name of making reports against the so-called lobbyist.

I remember that last year police arrested an innocent person under the instigation of his business rivals. Police implicated him in a murder case and beat him badly in the police station. When the relatives of the accused failed to get any justice they went to the Home Minister. The Minister was very kind to listen to their plea and warned the police not to violate the law. After that police stopped beating and the accused was released by the court. This is one of the numerous stories where the Home Minister himself had to lobby for the innocent! Can he stop doing that overnight?

Rezaur Rahman
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