

CHAPTER 12

EAST ASIAN STUDIES

Doctoral Theses

066. CHAUHAN (Rakhee)
India-China Boundary Dispute in the Eastern Sector.
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Abstract

There is not yet definite record to establish that the world's two oldest civilizations, India and China, had any extensive contacts in the centuries before Christ but Buddhism, organising in India, had spread to parts of China by the first century AD. Later contacts between the two were either commercial, both oversea and overland, or the visits of Buddhist pilgrims from China to India and of some Buddhist scholars and teachers from India to China. That was an age when the two had much to give and take in civilizational terms. However, after 1947/49 the two countries began the latest and easily the most contentious phase in their age-old relationship. The years since then have cast such long shadows on their relationship that the multi-textured and multi-dimensional relationship of the earlier periods of infinitely greater variety and tremendous mutual benefit to both has by now become merely a subject of academic research and discussion. A dispassionate review of the road to the 1962 war points to a tale of missed opportunities and mutual misperceptions which were compounded by errors of judgement on both sides at the highest level. The current phase of detente in Sino-Indian relations should be seen as a short-term tactical move on the part of both countries at a time of their vulnerability in a US-dominated unipolar world. No possible boundary agreement would reduce the need for the deployment of Indian armed forces along the northern frontiers. Even if the territorial dispute were resolved, India and China would retain a competitive relationship in the Asia-Pacific region; the basic insecurities of the two nations will continue to bedevil their relationship. Since a negotiated border settlement has proven to be difficult to achieve, the two sides have now decided to put it on the backburner. It is better for

India to let this problem stand over for the present and leave its solution to future generations. An India-China boundary agreement will undoubtedly inflame Tibetan opinion against India. Any such agreement, therefore, should at the very least be provisional pending the settlement of the status of Tibet vis-a-vis China. The security of the northern frontiers of India lies in the re-establishment of an independent Tibet. It should be the object of Indian policy to exclude hostile influences from Tibet and to work for the establishment in that country of a government which should be either friendly to India or at least neutral.

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