

## In My Eyes: India, Indians and India-China Relations\*

**Mr Luo Zhaohui, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in India®**

**L**ieutenant General PK Singh, Director USI, Shri Kanwal Sibal, Ambassador and former Foreign Secretary of India and dear friends, Namaste (Good Morning)!

It's my great honor to come to the United Service Institution of India (USI) and meet with friends here. USI is one of the major, most influential Indian think tanks with the longest history. I want to thank General Singh for his invitation and gracious remarks.

Last month, I visited Assam and paid special homage to the Second World War cemetery of Chinese soldiers at Tinsukia district. Among the over 400 soldiers buried there, only one name can be found on the tombstones; and that cemetery is only one of many. From 1942 to 1945, Chinese soldiers fought side by side with the British and the Indian Army and more than 100,000 of them sacrificed their precious lives on foreign soil. Even today, their families, if any, don't know where they are buried. This is what being a soldier is all about.

Being a soldier means devotion, sacrifice and defence of peace. I am a career diplomat, and there is much in common between a diplomat and a soldier. Being a diplomat also means sacrifice, discipline and pursuit of peace. On this occasion, I want to salute all the soldiers.

I am from China, a neighbour of India. Our two countries have thousands of years of friendship and practical common interests, and sometimes, differences and grievances.

First of all, let me share with you how the Chinese look at India and the Indians. First, speaking of India, people in China may immediately think of the long history of exchanges and profound

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\*This is the text of the talk delivered by His Excellency Mr Luo Zhaohui, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in India at the USI on 05 May 2017, with Shri Kanwal Sibal, IFS (Retd), former Foreign Secretary of India, in the chair.

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integration of our two cultures. The Indus River civilization, Buddha and the ancient Silk Road will crop up in mind. In 67 AD, the Ming Emperor of China's Eastern Han Dynasty dreamed of a golden man and was told by his advisor that it was the Buddha. So the Emperor sent envoys to invite the Buddha to his land. On the way, the envoys met two Indian monks carrying Buddhist sutras on the back of a white horse. They returned to the capital city of Luoyang, and built the first Buddhist temple in China – the White Horse Temple. Of course, this episode was not the first record of historical contact between China and India. Our two countries had been in touch for hundreds of years before that.

In 2003, Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee visited the White Horse Temple and donated for the construction of an Indian style Buddhist Hall with good intention, which became a new symbol of China-India friendship. At the time when Golden Gupta Dynasty ruled India, there were Hindu temples in China's Quanzhou city, the starting point of the Maritime Silk Road. They attested to the large presence of Indian merchants in Quanzhou at that time as well as the prosperity Quanzhou enjoyed due to the Maritime Silk Road.

Not long ago, I visited Ajanta Caves, which inspired the Dunhuang Grottoes, Yungang Grottoes and Longmen Grottoes in China, and whose styles of caves, sculptures and frescos had great influence on China. China's history books are full of stories of eminent monks like Xuanzang, Faxian and Bodhidharma travelling through the Silk Road and serving as bridges between Chinese and Indian cultures. Our two countries have jointly produced the film *Kongfu Yoga*, and I'm facilitating the co-production of a new movie, the *Bodhidharma*. Monk Bodhidharma went to China at the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> Century A.D. and originated the Zen Buddhism and Shaolin martial arts. Before the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, no country had a larger impact on Chinese culture than India.

Secondly, there is a high degree of similarity between the history of China and India, signaling a special link between the two countries. Both are among the four ancient civilisations. Confucius lived during the Spring and Autumn Period of China, while Buddha emerged in India at about the same time, and Buddha was 10 years older than Confucius. The first Emperor who unified China was Qin Shi Huang, the First Emperor of Qin Dynasty, while the

first Emperor that unified India was Ashoka. They also lived around the same period. When China was enjoying strength and prosperity under the rule of Tang Dynasty, India was experiencing the Golden Age of Gupta Dynasty. And, the Mughal period of Indian history ran in parallel with the heydays of Qing Dynasty. After that, China and India became semi-colony or colony, and then gained Independence and liberation at almost the same time. This degree of similarity of history shows the similarity between our civilisations, and economic development level, as well as the closeness of our exchanges. That's why we put forward the "Panchsheel" together.

Thirdly, there is a well-known tourism promotion slogan about India – Incredible India. For the Chinese people, India is a country with long history and profound civilisation, wonderful landscapes and unique culture. Chinese people believe the Indian people are intelligent, good at math and logical analysis. They think everyone here is an IT genius, good singer and dancer. This is a tradition derived from the ancient *Upanishad*. Almost all the major religions, including Brahmanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Jainism, Sikhism etc., can trace their origin back to India. There were also many prominent historical figures in India, like Rama, Buddha, Sankaracharya, Akbar, Mahatama Gandhi, Tagore, etc. In recent years, as India promotes Yoga across the world, Yoga is becoming highly popular among Chinese white collar workers. A Yoga college and many Yoga organisations have been established in China. There are many Yoga practitioners among Chinese diplomats in the Chinese Embassy in India. Indian cuisines are popular in China and famous for their spicy, hot and curry taste, particularly Tandoori Chicken and Chapati. In a word, speaking of India, all that comes to mind of a Chinese are the good things.

For me, India is like my second hometown. Before joining the Foreign Service, I was doing research on India in a Chinese think tank. The opportunity to go to India was the only reason inspiring me to become a diplomat. Indeed, under the circumstances in the 1980s, becoming a diplomat seemed to be the only way to come to India. I was first posted in India in the late 1980s, and since then, I personally witnessed and took part in many major events in the China-India relations. My wife Dr. Jiang Yili was the first Chinese to get PhD from Delhi University.

Friends, I would like to share with you the Chinese perspective on India's development and China-India relationship.

The ecological environment is as good as what it was during my first posting in India more than 20 years ago. Delhi has become cleaner with wider streets and new high risings. The subway and highway impressed me with the rapid and tremendous changes taking place in India. I have visited Maharashtra, Assam, Rajasthan, West Bengal and Bihar, where I saw remarkable progress in local infrastructures. According to the latest statistics, India's GDP has reached 2.2 trillion US dollars, ranking the 6<sup>th</sup> largest economy in the world. India is also the fastest growing economy. I would like to congratulate you on what India has achieved.

I am also glad to see that China has contributed its share to India's development. The China-India bilateral trade volume is now over 70 billion US dollars. Cumulative Chinese investment in India was nearly 5 billion US dollars. Over 500 Chinese companies have established themselves in India. Over one million people travelled between our two countries last year. There are 80 flights between our two countries every week.

Today, China is the second largest economy in the world, with a GDP of 11 trillion US dollars. China's development also benefited from India's participation.

We sincerely hope that India can become more developed, as it not only benefits Indian people but also creates more opportunities for China's development. Some people in the West misread China and tend to think that the "Dragon" and the "Elephant" are inevitable rivals, and that China would not like to see India developing. This conception is wrong. We hope to see India develop well and we are more than happy to help India develop to achieve common development.

That is why we attach great importance to the China-India relations. Only with sound bilateral relations can we promote development, and create more facilities for our common development. Essentially, the growth of bilateral relations and common development are inseparable.

First, we need to synergise development strategies. As the two largest developing countries, China and India have similar visions and complementary strategies of development. We both support globalisation and free trade. China is at a crucial stage of

comprehensively deepening reform and economic restructuring. We are implementing programmes such as “Made in China 2025”, “Internet Plus”. India is also at a critical juncture of reform and development, and Prime Minister Modi has put forward such initiatives as “Make in India”, “Digital India”, and “Smart Cities”. We need to synergise our development strategies and pursue common development.

Second, we need to continue to deepen practical cooperation in the economic and trade area. We may actively explore building a China-India Free Trade Area or Regional Trading Arrangement, and encourage cooperation on major projects. We look forward to the new industrial cities to be built by Wanda Group and China Fortune Land Development Co. (CFLD) in India. These projects will help create local jobs and boost India’s development. We can work together in new and renewable energy and foster new areas of cooperation.

Third, we need to continue the close exchanges in political, people-to-people and cultural fields. We should give full play to the role of high level exchanges in guiding bilateral relations. President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Modi will have opportunities to meet each other on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit, G20 Summit and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) Summit this year. We may also further expand exchanges between youths and local governments. China will receive a 200-member youth delegation from India next month.

Fourth, we need to properly manage differences. As two large neighbours, it is natural that we have some differences. Even family members may have problems. What we need to do is to properly manage the existing issues while actively resolve newly emerged problems. We shall reduce differences by focusing on cooperation and work for a healthier bilateral relationship by addressing differences.

Fifth, we need to set a long term vision for the China-India relations. Here is my suggestion. Firstly, start negotiation on a *China-India Treaty of Good Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation*. Secondly, restart negotiation of China-India Free Trade Agreement. Thirdly, strive for an early harvest on the border issue. Fourthly, actively explore the feasibility of aligning China’s “One Belt One Road Initiative” (OBOR) and India’s “Act East Policy”.

The OBOR and regional connectivity could provide China and India with fresh opportunities and highlights for the bilateral cooperation. The OBOR is a major public product China has offered to the world. It is a strategic initiative aimed at promoting globalisation and economic integration.

India has initiated a host of attractive reforms and open-up policies, such as “Make in India”. On the diplomatic front, India has put forward the “Act East Policy”, “Spice Route” etc., and a number of regional connectivity initiatives, as well as vigorously pushed forward the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). As close neighbours, China and India could be natural partners in connectivity and the OBOR.

Now the GDP of India is roughly that of China in 2004, some 13 years ago. China leads India by 13 years mainly because we started reforms and opening-up 13 years earlier. India has its advantages, such as a large number of English speaking population, the population dividend, a booming market, a sound legal system, as well as its leading role in IT, bio-pharmaceuticals and Bollywood, to name just a few.

Compared with China, India has a few disadvantages. Globally, the current trend of anti-globalisation and anti-free trade is not in line with India’s open-up efforts. India’s neighbouring environment is different from that of China. China’s reforms and opening-up benefited from its proximity to developed economies like Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore. Shenzhen grew into a major metropolis mainly thanks to its closeness to Hong Kong. China and India differ in political systems and China enjoys stronger policy consistency. India’s political system has its own advantages but sometimes may cause fluctuations in its policies or at least in its pace of development. As soon as China set reforms and opening-up as its center task, the whole nation is in full sail. China’s accession to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is a typical example where domestic development and reform are boosted through external factors. After I came to India, one of my impressions was that some bureaucrats of India, to a certain extent, could not catch up with the pace of its politicians. Some policies are implemented too slowly. At the same time, Pradeshes are keener on attracting investments and expanding trade relations with foreign countries.



In this context, like the Indian initiatives, China's OBOR focuses on improving regional connectivity and economic cooperation, especially infrastructure building. It can meet the need of the countries along the OBOR and provide India and other regional countries with important opportunities. We have noted that India is relatively positive to the BCIM Economic Corridor, and hosted the third meeting of the BCIM Economic Corridor Joint Study Group not long ago. As a founding member of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), India has appointed the Vice President to the Bank. Just a few days ago, the AIIB granted funds for the projects under India's "Power for All" in Andhra Pradesh.

However, India still has reservations over the OBOR, saying that the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes through the Pakistan-Controlled-Kashmir, raising sovereignty concerns. China has no intention to get involved in the sovereignty and territorial disputes between India and Pakistan. China supports the solution of the disputes through bilateral negotiations between the two countries. The CPEC is for promoting economic cooperation and connectivity. It has no connections to or impact on sovereignty issues. Even we can think about renaming the CPEC. China and India have had successful experience of delinking sovereignty disputes with bilateral relations before. In history, we have had close cooperation along the ancient Silk Road. Why shouldn't we support this kind of cooperation today? In a word, China is sincere in its intention to cooperate with India on the OBOR, as it is good for both of us.

Some Indian media say that China always puts Pakistan first when handling its relations with South Asian countries. I want to tell you this is not true. Simply put, we always put China first and we deal with problems based on their own merits. Take Kashmir issue for example, we supported the relevant UN resolutions before 1990s. Then we supported a settlement through bilateral negotiation in line with the *Simla Agreement*. This is an example of China taking care of India's concerns. Today few Indian friends remember this episode, or they have chosen to forget it. On Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) issue, we do not oppose any country's membership, believing that a standard for admission should be agreed upon first. On promoting India-Pakistan reconciliation, we hope that both sides could live together in peace, because this is conducive to

regional stability and is in the interests of China. The development of China, India, Pakistan and the stability of the whole region call for a stable and friendly environment. Otherwise, how could we open up and develop? That's why we say we are willing to mediate when India and Pakistan have problems. But the precondition is that both India and Pakistan accept it. We do this only out of good will. We do hope that there is no problem at all. When the Mumbai terrorist attacks on November 26, 2008, took place, I was Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, and I did a lot of mediation at that time.

Now I want to move on to the topic of China-India counter-terrorism cooperation. Last November, Mr Meng Jianzhu, Special Envoy of President Xi Jinping and Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Committee of the CPC Central Committee visited India. He met with Prime Minister Modi and Minister of Home Affairs, Rajnath Singh. The two sides had in-depth communications on counter-terrorism and security cooperation. Before that, the two sides held the High-level Security and Counter-terrorism Meeting, opening a new chapter in law enforcement and security cooperation between our two countries. I attended all the meetings and was greatly encouraged.

China has been a victim of terrorism. In the 1990s, Taliban trained the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) elements. Then the ETIM elements took refuge along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border area, threatening security and stability of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China. As a UN sanctioned terrorist group, ETIM is still creating trouble for us today, and we are ready to step up counter-terrorism cooperation with India and Pakistan. While I was Ambassador to Pakistan, I got to realise that Pakistan also suffered seriously from terrorism. Back then, my 9-year-old daughter was with me in Pakistan. Every time we returned to China for holiday, upon arriving at the Beijing Airport, she would let out a sigh of relief, saying that finally she could hang out freely. What I want to say is, first, China strongly opposes terrorism; second, China is ready to work with India, Pakistan, Afghanistan and the international community in fighting terrorism, and believes that terrorism knows no borders; third, countries need to have compatible policies, consensus and actions in fighting terrorism.

Thank you.