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## The Unending India-China Dance.

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By Bhaskar Roy

India-China relations have come a long way since the 1962 border war, mostly in the positive direction. India has over 4000 Kilometre long border with China, but Beijing maintains it is much shorter because it does not accept India's territorial claims and sovereignty on sections of the border.

Neither India nor China can wish each other away. As the two countries continue to rise, with China still ahead of India the gap is slowly narrowing but problems instead of receding are multiplying.

For India, the China policy is not a zero sum game. Successive Indian Prime Ministers have proved it and Prime Minister Modi has done so most emphatically. Mr. Modi's policy is not to counter China but to promote a shared vision of mutual benefit and developing together. Indian governments, including the present Modi government, have tried to ensure that China is not rubbed the wrong way. In fact, India can be faulted for conceding too much at times.

India's efforts have been to try and build trust. But trust must be verifiable, not built on thin air. There is a huge problem here.

One would dare say that there is a lack of understanding in the Indian establishment dedicated to China policy, of understanding the Chinese mind and interpreting what the Chinese say and what the Chinese media writes.

Over a decade ago an idea was being bandied about in the Indian establishment that the Chinese official media such as the party's mouth piece the 'People's Daily', the official news agency the *Xinhua*, or the military PLA flagship newspaper '*the Liberation Army Daily*' and others are like the Indian media. They are not. Why such an idea was floated is anybody's guess. The Chinese establishment, both of the party

and the government, never hid the fact that the Chinese media served their establishment by law enshrined in the party's and the State's constitution.

Now President Xi Jinping has made it abundantly clear that the media serves the Party and the State. Any violation attracts strict action.

A recent example- A documentary film was aired over the Chinese Central Television (CCTV) showing the Lashkar-e-Toiba's (LET) involvement in the Mumbai Terrorist attack. The reaction from some quarters in India was that China may be moving to support India in listing Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) Chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist in the UN Terrorism Committee. The Chinese Foreign Ministry responded (June 16) officially, saying that the documentary "does not represent the position of Chinese government." Spokesman Hang Lei clarified that "China's stance against terrorism is unchanged."

**The message was very clear: China is not going to change its stand on Masood Azhar.**

The documentary in question was an American production. It was translated into Chinese by the CCTV. But it was not an innocent show either. Nothing can be aired by the CCTV without official clearance.

It was aired to see India's position/reaction on the Masood Azhar issue. The other reason, to educate the Chinese people about the threat from Islamic terrorism with Pakistan not named but in a parenthesis. China is acutely aware of the potential of Pakistan-based terrorist groups, to indoctrinate, train and arm Uighur militants fighting for independence in Xinjiang. The only time that a senior leader had named Pakistan in providing the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) sanctuary was in 2008, in the run up to the Beijing Olympics.

Since then, China readjusted its strategy. It has co-opted the increasingly dependant Pakistan's establishment. It has also opened discreet communication with Pakistan's right wing religious groups. It has maintained close contacts with the Taliban (Afghan) which views China as a friend. All stitched up in this region, at least for now.

In a manner, some of these Pakistani groups are turning out to be China's sleeping assets. Masood Azhar thanked China for its stance against India.

China's stand, let alone fight, against international terrorism has been deceptive. Its fight against "three evils"- religious extremism, separatism and militant violence- remains within the borders of the country. Beyond that, it is either silent or cursory or juggling with semantics. As long as China is protected from external extremism, it can take care of its internal militancy and separatists. Meanwhile, it will remain happy with India being slowly bled by terrorism.

China will be mindful of its assets and interests. Currently, they are vulnerable in Pakistan. The Pakistan Army has dedicated an army

division to secure the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. (CPEC).

Returning to the Azhar issue, it is not a nonnegotiable issue for China. Putting a technical hold on the Indian move in the United Nations means a door has been kept open. Its moves will depend upon circumstances. If and when China finds its position untenable, or can benefit by notifying Azhar as a terrorist, it will go along.

India's membership to the Nuclear Supplier's Group (NSG) is a much bigger issue for China and its ally Pakistan. The next meeting of the 48 member group to be held in Seoul on June 24-25 will consider India's membership. China has come out openly with its opposition to India's bid and is supporting Pakistan's membership saying that India and Pakistan are both non signatories to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The decision of the NSG is on a consensus. Therefore, one member can take the other forty-seven down!

Given Pakistan's proliferation record, its nuclear button in the hands of the army, with its tactical weapons deployed on India's borders controlled by a Brigadier or a Divisional commander, Pakistan has no chance to go through even if it had signed the NPT.

Pakistan is a highly explosive concoction of nuclear weapons, jihadis of all kinds ( with some even fighting the State), inflamed borders and a dysfunctional political structure; it is a fit case for nuclear disarming. Its deployment of tactical nuclear weapons is akin to North Korea threatening South Korea and Japan with nuclear strikes. Pakistan threatens the region and has avoided strict international sanctions because of its critical location.

The NPT is no longer worth the paper it is written on- North Korea is a case in point. NSG has been violated by at least one of its members- namely China. Beijing joined the NSG in 2004-did not disclose its close involvement of its Pakistan's civil nuclear programme, and continues to supply nuclear reactors (power) to Pakistan with the excuse that it had signed the contract with Pakistan before it joined the NSG.

**In all legality China should have been expelled from the NSG.**

Apparently the Chinese concluded that India failed to understand why they were obstructing New Delhi's NSG membership. They carefully noted every step India was taking to either pressurise them or placate them at the same time. Mr. Modi's latest surge to Switzerland, the United States and Mexico and the understanding with Italy, plus his telephone call to Russian President Putin, seeking support for NSG also signalled India's diplomatic moves to isolate China in the NSG.

An article on the issue in the official Chinese Newspaper, the *Global Times* (June 14, 2016) a subsidiary of the Party mouth piece the *People's Daily* appeared to have further clarified China's position. It made the following points.

\* **Washington views New Delhi as a balancing factor in its pivot to the Asia-Pacific strategy.** Its supply of nuclear technology is to enhance India's deterrence capability is to put China in check.

\* **Pakistan is not willing to see an increasing nuclear gap with India and the outcome will be a nuclear race.**

\* **It will jeopardise China's national interests.**

\* **US interest is to sell nuclear technology to India** ( for Indian groups who oppose the India-US nuclear deal to note)

The Chinese position has become more clear with the Global Times article. Protecting and promoting Pakistan is only a small part of the Chinese argument. The much larger and long term Chinese planning is to block empowerment of India and a possible India-US strategic collaboration to prevent China's hegemony over Asia.

India has separated its civil and military nuclear programmes and placed itself under IAEA supervision. India's development requires massive increase of electric power capacity and nuclear energy will contribute to that. Why is China concerned over India getting nuclear power plants from Westinghouse (USA)?

Development of India's military capacity especially nuclear and missile capability is a concern for China and will neutralise China's advantage. India does not require the massive nuclear and missile stockpile that China has built and continues to expand to eventually counter the US.

The Global Times says "Its (USA's) supply of nuclear technology to enhance India's deterrence capability is to put China in check. **It goes on to say that this will "jeopardise China's interests."**

The Indian Government must understand that no amount of placating China will help in the NSG issue. Omitting mention of the South China Sea in the Modi Obama joint statement is June does not impress China. Nor does easing of visas and glossing over Chinese military intrusions.

India must take note of the recent upgradation of the Tibet Military Command, specifically targeting the India-China border. India needs fast paced defence upgradation. It is also time that India seriously thinks about China's on going nuclear and missile proliferation to Pakistan and North Korea.

**Hit where it hurts the most. The heavens will not come down. If a step is taken it must be well thought out and with the stamina to stay on course.**

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