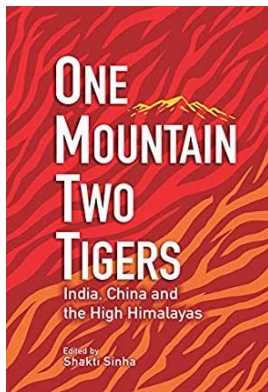


One Mountain Two Tigers: India, China, and the High Himalayas



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Atal Bihari Institute of Policy Research & International Studies
& Pentagon Press limited, New Delhi, 2020
ISBN – 978-93-90095-10-0
Pages: 201

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The May-June standoff in Ladakh between the Indian Army and the Chinese PLA surprised not only India, but the entire globe, as everyone's attention was focused on combating the Covid-19 outbreak. Why did China decide to become a military aggressor at this time? What are the residual disagreements between these Asian behemoths, who will soon be the world's top two economies? Is India's claim to Aksai Chin based solely on colonial India's security needs? Or did Indians have dominion over these territories in the past? What are the historical ties between these places and the Indian mainland? What is Ladakh's geostrategic significance? Did the Chinese Communist Party's internal strife lead to the breakdown of relations with India? Has India learned the lessons of 1962, and what role does it play militarily in Ladakh? Is India fundamentally misinterpreting China? Was the Wuhan Spirit and the Chennai Connect useful? Are there any other important aspects of India-China ties in which the latter may be at a disadvantage?

This book goes into great length on these and other similar issues. This compilation, compiled by Shakti Sinha and launched in the middle of the current political upheaval in India-China ties, comes at an appropriate time. The book is made up of a series of pieces that trace the history of India-China relations since the millennium. It explores the many myths that China has cloaked itself in, and seeks to answer specific concerns concerning the country's history and connections with India. In an age where information released in the media is often taken with a grain of salt, this book gives a complete history of India-China foreign affairs, separating fallacies from facts and establishing and analysing the origins of the two ancient nations' connection.

The first chapter by Shubash Kak's demonstrates Indian civilization's far-reaching cultural influence across what is now mainland China. The author places special emphasis on the region of Uttarakuru (now Xinjiang) and how post-Vedic Indians influenced the region's language, culture, and religion. The chapter tells a fascinating story that spans the centuries, beginning with the time when the original languages, Prakrit and Sanskrit, were still widely spoken across the country. The book then moves on to the early interactions between Ladakh, Bhutan, and Tibet, which the author associates with Nehru's influence on Indo-Tibet relations during his tenure as Prime Minister. Later in the book, the book dives further into the People's Republic of China's colonization of Tibet and Xinjiang, a topic that is still being debated today. The essay focuses not only on the occupation of the country, but also on the impact it had on Tibet's trade links, cultural relationships, and politics in the future. The book elucidates the complexities of Indian-Chinese history, as well as the surrounding territories that were touched, influenced, or, in some cases, occupied by China. While most accounts on the subject go back to the colonial and postcolonial eras to understand the two countries' conflicted and tug-of-war relationship, the book's goal in this case is to establish a firmer grasp on the millennia-old history that has culminated in the current standing and relations both countries hold.

The 14-chapters publication begins with chapters focusing mostly on historical aspects—essential for a comprehensive knowledge of bilateral ties. P Stobdan's second chapter, *India-China Relations: Ladakhi and Dogra Claims in China*, outlines the region's history. This is especially important since it emphasizes the region's strategic relevance in the India-China bilateral relationship while also highlighting critical features that are sometimes overlooked. The chapter is not limited to the Indo-China narrative, but also considers the roles of other major players.

The book present a brief history of the countries before and during the colonial era, and the book continues its voyage in the relatively modern history of the countries beginning with the fourth chapter. It gives the required information to comprehend why the border has been and continues to be contested since the McMahon line was established, with a chapter on the history of the Indo-China border dispute and the present flare-up on the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In our recent recollection of India and China's apparent tug-of-war alliance, the beginning of what looked to be growing enmity from China's side came to a climax in discussions leading up to the 1962 Indo-China War. Two of the chapters in this book discuss the reasons behind

the very violent debate that jolted India out of its pacifist trance, leaving a deep hole in both countries' perceptions of the other. The remainder of the book transports us to the twenty-first century to address our queries concerning the current state of affairs between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi Jinping.

The 1962 conflict is invariably the starting point for any examination of the India-China relationship. Two chapters are particularly significant in this context. In *The Shadows of 1962*, Ajay Singh draws comparisons between the 1962 conflict and the current situation, concluding that "the stakes are far higher." Sriparna Pathak's chapter *1962 and Beyond* on the post-1962 situation contends that the recent conflict will have an indelible impact on the bilateral relationship, limiting the possibilities for any kind of cooperation with China in the near future.

The chapters by Prachi Aggarwal and Hema Narang are significant since they both bring critical topics to light. Aggarwal begins by comparing the political rises of Xi and Modi in their respective countries. She then delves into Xi's domestic concerns. Narang summarizes the distinctions in the use of soft power by China and India. This is especially essential because the nature of soft power would alter dramatically in a post-Covid world.

Monish Tourangbam's chapter presents a thorough overview of the complex India-Pakistan-US triangle, as well as India's ties with Russia. While the author makes a persuasive case for India-US relations to improve, he concludes that India will not be able to "choose sides," as some analysts and strategists have proposed.

Sana Hashmi's chapter on India-Taiwan relations argues for strengthening economic and strategic connections under the auspices of Taiwan's new south-bound policy and the Indo-Pacific cooperation narrative. The author also cautions against becoming overly reactive and viewing the relationship only through the perspective of China.

Shakti Sinha's concluding chapter, "China: Anxiety and Aggression," is a work of art in and of itself. It recalls China's incredible irresponsibility in supporting the spread of the Corona Virus to many regions of the world, followed by escalating disagreements with multiple countries over matters that had no direct provocation. China has also started verbal fights with other countries, employing unparliamentary language that was formerly reserved for a few handpicked opponents such as the Dalai Lama. The unabashed disregard has been connected to China's spectacular rise, but the current realization that the economic trajectory is unlikely

to continue. Environmental difficulties and China's one-child policy have posed challenges to social growth. According to the author, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its General Secretary are nervous and uneasy due to the wide spectrum of conflicts with a variety of countries. The future holds the key to China's recovery or decline as an economic superpower.

The cases that have occasionally surfaced are not isolated occurrences. Developments on the Indo-China border, including sociopolitical and economic developments, as well as trade-related movements, are the result of a series of events triggered by a critical balance of conflicting economic and political forces between Asian nations and superpowers such as the United States of America and the Soviet Union. Solutions could be decades away.

Overall, this book brings together a smorgasbord of India-China connections throughout history. Each of the events described in this book had very evident ramifications for both countries and their contemporary perceptions of their place in the world order. The book connects these events in a continuous flow, making comprehending the context of these exchanges simple. In light of the recent geopolitical squabbles, it is an excellent read for the scholars, students of international relations for gaining an overall knowledge of India and China's old and complicated relationship. The inclusion of examples and cases enhances the readability of the content. Additionally, the ideas are well-defined. All critical elements of the challenges are addressed. The clear hazy picture of India-China relations from history till present will be clear by reading chapter's from the beginning till end.