

# China, India further normalize relations

by Ramtanu Maitra and Susan Maitra

The July 17-18 visit by Chinese Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen to India can best be described as part of a process to normalize relations between the two most populous nations in Asia. China and India were engaged in a brief border war in 1962 following the breakdown in negotiations over a disputed 4,000-km-long border, a legacy left behind by the British colonial rulers. The incident had frozen bilateral relations for almost 26 years—a period during which both nations were heavily influenced by a warped geopolitical framework imposed through the Cold War.

During the past six years, however, serious efforts have been made by both countries to open up closed minds, and both have shown eagerness to bring down the wall of suspicion and fear erected over the decades. Last September the normalization process received a major boost with the successful visit of Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao to Beijing, where the two countries signed an accord to maintain peace and tranquility along the disputed border. It was no surprise when Foreign Minister Qian, at a press conference in New Delhi as he wound up his trip, said he hoped the present “close confrontation” or “close proximity” of the two countries’ forces would end soon and peace would prevail all along the border.

Chinese Defense Minister Chi Haotian will be visiting India this September, returning the visit of India’s then-Defense Minister Sharad Pawar, who visited Beijing two years ago.

In addition, on July 24, Indian Chief of Army Staff Gen. B.C. Joshi left for Beijing for a visit to three other cities in the west and south of China. Joshi has earned the unique distinction of being the first Indian Chief of Army Staff to visit China.

At the New Delhi press conference, Foreign Minister Qian pointed out that not only were friendly ties between India and China of “fundamental” importance in the bilateral context, but also a necessary factor for peace in the region and the world, given the “new international situation.” He also pointed out, quoting the Indian prime minister, that overnight solutions to such a complex issue as the India-China border demarcation could not be found. “We stand for peaceful coexistence. We have talked about it for five years,” Qian noted.

During his talks with Prime Minister Rao, both leaders



*China's Foreign Minister Qian Qichen on a visit to Washington in 1990. Chinese-Indian relations, now thawing, have been frozen for almost 26 years.*

have noted that cooperation between India and China, particularly in economic and commercial areas, has assumed greater significance.

## Fears and suspicions

But there are many in India who are suspicious and fearful of closer India-China ties. Typical of the paranoid reflex was press treatment of Qian’s remarks on the subject of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, the two border states of India whose integration into the Indian Union has not been acknowledged by China. Sikkim, previously an independent kingdom, had joined the Indian Union through a democratic process in 1975, and Arunachal Pradesh, a border state located in a territory that is claimed by the Chinese and is part of over 100,000 square kilometers of disputed territory, was integrated and given the status of a state in the mid-1980s.

The expectation among some that Qian may announce China’s recognition of Sikkim as a part of India during his present trip was bolstered by an earlier statement by the Chinese ambassador, Cheng Ruisheng, who suggested that Beijing was preparing to recognize the merger of Sikkim. Qian did state that the matter is under discussion between the two countries, and, he implied, within the Chinese leadership. Non-recognition of Sikkim’s accession to India “was our position in the 1970s,” Qian said. “I am not saying that we stick to our position on this, but we have not made any specific change.”

The Sikkim issue was played up overtly by those who remain suspicious of China’s intent vis-à-vis the normaliza-

tion of ties with India. And, the *Economic Times* went so far as to blast China on Tibet, in its ire over the Sikkim issue: "The Chinese are now not only insisting on Indian troops withdrawing from certain forward positions while maintaining their own presence there, but also trying to deflect the growing international pressure for greater democracy and human rights in Tibet."

There were also attempts to distort the recent visit of General Joshi to China. During the visit, which was not played up as a major event in China, Joshi had the opportunity to meet the commander of the Chengdu military region and the head of the Lanzhou military region. The Chengdu military region oversees the Chinese Army presence on the Indo-Tibetan border, while the Lanzhou military region oversees the border between Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir and the Chinese province of Xinjiang. That is, Joshi met with the two commanders whose troops are the only ones in contact with the Indian border troops.

Although General Joshi also met with Defense Minister Chi Haotian, Armed Forces Chief of General Staff Gen. Zhang Wannian, and Deputy Chief Gen. Xu Huizi, the media chose to emphasize that he had not met with China's highest-ranking military leader, Gen. Liu Huaqing, vice chairman of

the Central Military Commission.

### The Pakistan angle

Those eager to show that Chinese overtures are not sincere, also picked on China-Pakistan relations. Just after Qian's departure for Kathmandu, Nepal, the Indian daily *Hindustan Times* said that India is concerned about large arms transfers to Pakistan by China. The article pointed out that China, which has become a major arms supplier to Pakistan, particularly since that country continues to face arms sanctions from Washington because of Islamabad's nuclear weapons program, has transferred missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads, in addition to providing assistance in developing Pakistan's nuclear power capability.

Incidentally, Washington had earlier reacted also to Chinese transfer of missiles and had taken note of the agreement between China and Pakistan, whereby China would supply Pakistan with a 300-megawatt nuclear reactor. On the nuclear issue, the United States argues that since Pakistan, like India, has not signed the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and is involved in making nuclear weapons, like India, China's decision to supply Pakistan with a nuclear reactor amounts to encouraging proliferation.

## Books Received

**Churchill's Deception: The Dark Secret that Destroyed Nazi Germany**, by Louis C. Kilzer, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, 335 pages, hardbound, \$23

**Life of the Party: The Biography of Pamela Digby Churchill Hayward Harriman**, by Christopher Odgen, Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1994, 494 pages, hardbound, \$24.95

**Bertrand Russell: A Life**, by Caroline Moorehead, Viking, New York, 1993, 596 pages, hardbound, \$30

**Senator Pothole: The Unauthorized Biography of Al D'Amato**, by Leonard Lurie, Carol Publishing, New York, 1994, 416 pages, hardbound, \$21.95

**Monty: The Battles of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery**, by Nigel Hamilton, Random House, New York, 1994, 653 pages, hardbound, \$30

**The Warburgs: The Twentieth Century Odyssey of a Remarkable Jewish Family**, by Ron Chernow, Random House, New York, 1993, 820 pages, hardbound, \$30

**Aristide, An Autobiography**, by Jean-Bertrand Aristide with Christophe Wargny, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, N.Y., 1993, 205 pages, hardbound, \$14.95

**Fernando of Cordova: A Biographical and Intellectual Profile**, by John Monfasani, American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, 1992, 116 pages, paperbound, \$18

**The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500-1200**, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Harry N. Abrams, New York, 1993, 358 pages, hardbound, \$60; paperbound, \$45

**Art Restoration: The Culture, the Business, and the Scandal**, by James Beck with Michael Daly, W.W. Norton, New York, 1994, 224 pages, hardbound, \$22.50

**Intervention: The United States and the Mexican Revolution, 1913-1917**, by John S.D. Eisenhower, W.W. Norton, New York, 1993, 393 pages, hardbound, \$27.50

**Conquest: Montezuma, Cortes, and the Fall of Mexico**, by Hugh Thomas, Simon & Schuster, New York, 1994, 812 pages, hardbound, \$30

**Confucian-Christian Encounters in Historical and Contemporary Perspective**, edited by Peter H.K. Lee, Edwin Mellen Press, Lewiston, N.Y., 1991, 479 pages, hardbound, \$89.95

**Japan's Investment and Asian Economic Interdependence**, by Shojiro Tokunaga, University of Tokyo Press/Columbia University Press, New York, 1992, 294 pages, hardbound, \$59.50