



## Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS)

Forum for National Security Studies (FNSS)

# CHINA'S BLUE BOOK ON INDIA - 2015

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The year 2015 was marked by human displacement, terrorist attacks, and territorial disputes. But for India, under the leadership of PM Modi, the year brought the nation out of its slumber into the realm of active high politics. Last year, a lot of attention was given to PM Modi's outward foreign policy, proactive engagement and economic interaction with the world at large. Much of this was viewed keeping China at the centre of the issue, that an increasingly powerful China would be an irrevocable threat to Indian security. Thereby, India was seen as 'the only capable balancer' to the threat of a rising China. PM Modi travelled to 25 countries in 15 months, adding the emphasis to India's external reach and rejuvenating relations. Due attention was given to the foreign policy (beyond the Indian sub-continent) creating a nexus of partners around the globe through military and economic cooperation. As a clear consequence India's economy grew at the rate of 7.3% in 2014-2015<sup>1</sup>. PM Modi approached China with the same resolve (despite

tensions at the China-India border) to better the economic and diplomatic ties.

China's view of India had been sombre wherein it downsized India's importance in the strategic arena. But in 2013, the Chinese premier think tank, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) released the first Blue Book on India signifying India's growing importance for strategists in China.

The 'Blue Book' is not an official paper representing the views of the government but is put together by official think tanks with a tacit backing by the government. This makes it a crucial document to interpret leading opinions in China. Since this book is read primarily by Chinese academics and common people, it is also an influential source for *creating* an opinion.

First, the 'Blue Book' on India made note of India's national politics, defence, foreign, and domestic policy, and its relations with its neighbours. The report (published in 2013) gave an account of India's defence modernization and

weapons acquisitions, hike in defence spending, increase in troops on the Indian borders, presenting a belief that India is preparing to fight a limited two-front war with Pakistan and China<sup>2</sup>. The changes were taken to indicate long term shifts in New Delhi's military strategy and planning. Interestingly, in this report, India's growing maritime interests were highlighted as the new threat to China's security. The book noted Indian naval deployments in joint exercises, long range operations on the high seas, and indigenous development of platforms of naval power projection, which included two aircraft carriers and two nuclear ballistic missile submarines, manifesting China's concern. It also mentioned domestic problems of corruption, general social unrest and stagnant economic progress. Interestingly, the book refrained from mentioning China's territorial claims on Arunachal Pradesh, border dispute, or Tibetan refugees in India. The book concluded on a positive note referring to a Chinese saying, "Many difficulties can make a country prosperous' reflects India's problems and hopes".

On 28 December 2015, Yunnan University and the Social Science Literature Publications jointly released the second 'India Blue Book 2015'<sup>3</sup> in Kunming. The second edition of the book appeared extensively pro-PM Modi and his style of governance, contrary to the views in the last book.

This book (2015) dealt with political, economic, cultural and social changes that India

went through in the new regime since 2014. It suggested positive and patterned growth in Indian economy but concluded domestic situation as getting worse.

The report lauded the new government as being a pleasant change from a long tradition of "hung parliament" and multi-party "coalition government". It also mentioned the 'impressive' strongman style of politics by the PM, implying the fastidious fashion of working in the current administration. The dissolution of Planning Commission under this administration was seen as the "beginning of second round of structural reforms" for India.

On the matters of economic progress, it was highlighted that tertiary and service sectors remained the biggest driving force for India's economic growth, while the conditions for industrial development remained complicated with "visible discrepancies in the growth patterns of different industries". It noted that though the scenario for progress appears to have better prospects in future, PM Modi will have to face the challenge of reducing the fiscal deficit and everyday goods and utilities deficit. A suggestion was made that the administration will have to quicken infrastructure-building projects and manufacturing industry expansion. He will have to continuously persevere in economic reforms, maintain Indian society's stability, and ensure a conducive external environment to take on these challenges.

The book paints a bleak picture of India's societal conditions pertaining to rising extremism, warning a re-emergence of inter-religious tensions, sectarian strife and communal violence. The book points out that in 2013-14, the degree of peace and stability within India and the living standards of common Indians both appeared to suffer a general decline. The document saw domestic politics as running a test, as it cited the total number of people who died in violent and terror-related incidents showed a visible increase as compared to the previous year. It was in this regard that the safety of common people was seen as threatened.

A critical point to note here is that the last book projected a failing image of India, domestically, while India armoured itself- which was seen as a potential threat to China. But this report highlights the cooperative actions taken by both administrations and the success thereof.

PM Modi, who was already an impressive personality in the Chinese media, has gained a favourable reputation in the Chinese view. But in the backdrop of the above assessment of domestic situation in India, certain challenges in the future trajectory of India-China relations can be predicted. The Indian administration will have to proactively seek reassurance from China of the all-important existence of a strong law and order and judicial system. The administration will also have to adopt ways of securing high investment, bypassing the said complications with economic reforms.

The book is bound to generate favourable opinion in the Chinese political, economic and social sector, and the results of this trend might be visible in the upcoming meetings between the two countries. But what China perceives of India will affect (positively/negatively) the flow of resources, investment and tourism to India.

*(Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the Centre for Air Power Studies [CAPS])*

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#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> 'India's economy grew at 7.3 per cent in 2014-15 fiscal', Indian Express, May 30 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/indias-economic-growth-to-beat-china-in-2015-16-imf/>, accessed on 2 Jan 2016; and

'India to surpass China's economic growth in 2015-16: IMF', Indian Express, 15 Apr 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/indias-economic-growth-to-beat-china-in-2015-16-imf/>, accessed on 2 Jan 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Rana Divyank Chaudhary "China: Reading Beijing's 'Blue Book' on India", 28 May 2013, IPCS, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/china-reading-beijings-blue-book-on-india-3951.html>, accessed on 2 Jan 2016.

<sup>3</sup> "India Blue Book released: Security Situation Worsens, Economic Development Improving" China News Service, Kunming, 28 December 2015), <http://finance.people.com.cn/n1/2015/1228/c1004-27986821.html>, accessed on 2 Jan 2016.