

BOOK REVIEW

The Long Game: A Masterpiece on Diplomacy

Author: Vijay Gokhale

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GAURAV SEN

Diplomacy has long been an important aspect of international politics, assisting in the acceleration and reshaping of its outlines. In today's world, when anarchy reigns supreme, sovereignty and nationalism have shaped practically every state-to-state engagement. Because one state's desires may not be in the best interests of another, diplomacy is charged with the unrestricted job of preserving the greatest possible benefit for the negotiating states. The Sino-Indian relationship is one of a kind, with diplomacy playing a key role in defining the current state of affairs. From the founding of the People's Republic of China until the present day, Sino-Indian relations have been a great story of salutary diplomacy, which Ambassador Vijay Gokhale, former Indian foreign secretary, attempted to depict in his new book, *The Long Game—How China Negotiates with India*. The book discusses, as

Mr **Gaurav Sen** is a PhD candidate at the Centre for African Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

the title itself suggests, Chinese negotiating tactics with India. The author takes help of six carefully analysed case studies to cater the Chinese way of Diplomacy spanning from 1949 to 2019.

The six chapters are organised around six ascending events in Sino-Indian negotiations history, which could logically be divided into bilateral and multilateral issues. "Recognition" of the People's Republic of China (1949), "Tibet: The Prince of Friendship" (1954), and "Sikkim: Half a Linguistic Pirouette" are bilateral issues, while "Pokhran: How to Untie a Knot from the Tiger's Neck", "123 Deal: The Big Turnaround", and "Masood Azhar: The Principle of Consensus" are multilateral issues. However, the bifurcation can also be expressed as "initial phase" and "later phase", which are strong contrasts in and of themselves, and we shall follow this pattern to better understand the book.

Diplomacy is one of the characters in which both players try to extract as much benefit as possible, but the author characterised the "Initial Phase" negotiations as a matter of "misplaced magnanimity" from the Indian side, which resulted in a poorly coordinated recognition of the People's Republic of China and signing off on the privileges in Tibet that were sanctioned by the Simla agreement of 1914, that too without any mutual gain.

The information in the book catapults it into a historical account, which is enriched by deep analysis and grave investigation of the events by the author himself, revealing a glimpse of direct benefits that are endowed upon it by the virtue of being written by a former diplomat who is closely associated with China. The author explains that China's carefully constructed tactic was to present itself as entirely unrestrained by time, and to press others if they showed even the slightest amount of haste. The haphazard conversations, which were frequently undertaken under the pressure of "time", proved to be a game changer for China.

During the recognition process, India's main concern is to take decision on the matter of recognition to avoid portraying itself as a "lackey of capitalist bloc", which was cleverly presented by Chinese media. The author expresses that the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru often disregarded the advice of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel and C. Rajagopalachari who cautioned him against the early recognition

of People's Republic but he relied on a tight circle of advisers. India's privileges in Tibet have also been portrayed by the infantile and immature diplomatic style, who wanted to break the deal as early as before the Geneva Convention 1954. According to the author, the demonstration of skilled diplomacy by the People's Republic is the result of its fortunate "unbroken tradition of diplomatic experience". Unlike India, China has never been under the direct rule of any foreign power. Sikkim incorporation and the Chinese studied silence on the recognition of it as a part of the Indian Union comes as a learning point for India. The position of Sikkim is somewhat like Tibet, but "Chinese process of recognition is gradual", that comes very late in 2005. India, on the matter of Sikkim, displayed no sense of urgency, by that time it had proved itself capable in altering the regional geography and after the "peaceful explosion" the diplomatic elites have filled with confidence. The author warned that "Chinese are skillful of manipulating the words and their meanings that has caused India dearly in 1950" but in the case of "Border Trade agreement" through Sikkim, India asked China to explicitly mention "India-China Border", to prevent future manipulation, showing India's learned diplomatic skills.

In the last chapter, the author explains China's "pre-negotiations" behaviours and their different conduct in bilateral and multilateral talks. When negotiating bilaterally China compelled the other side to agree on the "pre-negotiations" conditions, like subscribing to "One-China Policy" as India did in 1954, and similarly in the case of Masood Azhar listing, it insisted that India talk to Pakistan. On the multilateral forum China, even though unilaterally opposing the matter, always tries to show the issue as multilateral (123 deal), to inhibit the process in the name of technical issue (Masood Azhar listing) and instigates others to oppose. The author mentions China's opportunistic stance which sees any "crisis as an opportunity and rarely gives up any situation as a lost cause", the very attitude of China to paralyse the international negotiations and display itself as the only place to seek relief enables China to extract concessions. Notwithstanding, India's earlier experience with China and disadvantages it earned in earlier negotiations—those were also coincidentally bilateral—have helped India to a great length to decode Chinese diplomatic psychology. The

“later phase” has been less unfortunate for India, where the talks were mostly multilateral, and India with its enhanced stature on world stage, ready to take down the Chinese shrewd diplomatic style with its more adept approach. The later phase negotiations, mentioned in the book, have shown India’s relentless diplomacy that compelled the world to listen to India’s position on the nuclear issue, restricted China’s evergreen opposition and its “South Asian Dream”, leaving China segregated on the matter of Masood Azhar listing and gained a “Clean Waiver” from the United States.

The author tries to capture the Chinese diplomatic strategy, from leveraging left-wing parties to sabotaging the “Civil Nuclear Deal”, due to their long-standing distrust of the US, to the Chinese ingenuity in preventing Masood Azhar from being listed before the Indian elections in 2019. According to the author, China’s approach through Russia in the Masood Azhar listing issue was a cunning ploy, but India’s historical knowledge of Chinese tactics prompted India to reply vehemently and undercut China’s tendency to present the situation as multilateral rather than bilateral. India’s studied approach of China in the “later phase” was instrumental on multilateral forum while China’s outdated perspective of India and paucity of Indologists cost it dearly on one or two occasions.

The book navigates through a number of historical events between India and China, although it isn’t entirely academic, as indicated by the disorganised chapter structure and minor repetition. The events chosen by the author have received less attention in the past, making the book beneficial for students of international politics. The book’s advising section, which appears in the final chapter, could be quite useful to Indian diplomats. While Indian viewers may be aware of the events depicted in the book and may have an opinion, the book could be a valuable resource for a broader audience interested in learning about the complexities of diplomatic behaviour when two Asian powers meet.