

# Ambivalent accommodation: status signalling of a rising India and China's response

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In May 2016, Indian President Pranab Mukherjee paid a state visit to China. During his trip, he proposed a 'people-centric partnership' to deepen India's relationship with China.<sup>1</sup> This successful trip is just one of the increasing number of high-level exchanges that have been taking place between India and China as the leaders of both countries try to raise their relationship to a new level. On 23 June 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Tashkent. Xi congratulated India on signing the memorandum of obligation to join the SCO and said that China looked forward to enhancing cooperation with India within the SCO framework.<sup>2</sup> However, a few days later, India's bid to enter the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was turned down in Seoul. China, Brazil and some other members reportedly insisted that India sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty before admission was granted. When the news reached India, many Indians were furious with China.<sup>3</sup> They seemed to assume that India would be admitted to the NSG given that it had the publicly expressed support of the US, and they believed that China was the only country that had blocked its entry.<sup>4</sup> According to a senior Chinese diplomat, however, China did not oppose India's entry into the NSG. China was concerned about the criteria for NSG membership and the implications for non-proliferation in a wider context.<sup>5</sup> The Indian government later announced its intention to expel three Chinese journalists from the country—an announcement interpreted by the *Global Times*, a Chinese nationalist media

<sup>1</sup> Srinivasan Ramani, 'Pranab stresses people-centric partnership between India, China', *The Hindu*, 26 May 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pranab-at-peking-university/article8649237.ece>. (Unless otherwise stated at point of citation, all URLs cited in this article were accessible on 12 Nov. 2016.)

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, People's Republic of China (PRC), 'Xi Jinping meets with Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India', [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1375407.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1375407.shtml); Yongjin Zhang, 'Dynamism and contention: understanding Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 769–72; Peter Ferdinand, 'Westward ho—the China dream and "one belt, one road": Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 941–57.

<sup>3</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, 'India's NSG membership and China's containment strategy', Observer Research Foundation, 24 June 2016, <http://www.orfonline.org/expert-speaks/indias-nsg-membership-and-chinas-containment-strategy/>.

<sup>4</sup> Shubhajit Roy, 'No entry in NSG: India blames one country (China), others said no too', *Indian Express*, 25 June 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/no-entry-in-nsg-india-blames-one-country-china-others-said-no-too-2874377/>.

<sup>5</sup> Suhasini Haidar, 'India's NSG membership bid calls for in-depth discussion, says Beijing envoy Liu Jinsong', *The Hindu*, 17 July 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/article8862103.ece>.

outlet, as retaliatory overreaction.<sup>6</sup> These episodes illustrate the increasingly complex relationship between India and China as the two rising Asian powers both cooperate and compete in the twenty-first century. Their bilateral relationship is multifaceted, complex and sometimes difficult to manage.

The parallel rise of India and China is one of the most significant strategic developments in the twenty-first century. The relationship between the two Asian giants will play a decisive role in shaping the emerging global order in the new century. While the West has welcomed India's rise, China's response has been more ambivalent. This article makes the following arguments. First, as a rising power, India is sending complicated signals about its preferred status on the global stage. In particular, India is struggling for Great Power status while trying to maintain solidarity with developing countries. It is seeking to develop its image as an 'alternative power' that champions soft power, democracy and non-coercive diplomacy, while also developing hard-power capabilities similar to those of traditional Great Powers. Second, China's perceptions and interpretations of India's signals depend to a considerable degree on China's sense of its own identity as well as its political calculations. India's solidarity signal about its developing country status resonates well with Chinese elites. Modi's own active public diplomacy has been received positively by the Chinese public, and India's diplomatic activism more broadly has raised the country's profile in the eyes of China's policy elites. India's democratic model, however, has elicited mixed Chinese reactions, which reflect China's domestic political debates more than concerns with the Indian government.<sup>7</sup> Third, China is accommodating India's rise partially and ambivalently. Though India and China are competing with each other, Chinese elites largely view India as a potential global partner. A rising India will provide good opportunities for China's economic growth. Cooperation with India will allow Beijing to avoid a costly confrontation and reduce the domination of the United States in what is becoming a multipolar world. China is reluctant to accommodate some aspects of India's Great Power aspirations, but status politics is not a zero-sum game. Finally, distrust and competition still exist, and the asymmetry of power and perception continue to shape the trajectories of the relationship.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section discusses India's rise and the status signals it is giving. The second section analyses Chinese perceptions of a rising India. The third section discusses how and why China is accommodating India's rise partially and ambivalently. The concluding section summarizes the key findings and policy implications.

<sup>6</sup> 'India's expulsion of reporters is petty act', *Global Times*, 24 July 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/996234.shtml>.

<sup>7</sup> Zhang Yunling, 'China and its neighbourhood: transformation, challenges and grand strategy', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 835–48.

## **Status signalling of a rising India**

The rise of India as a global power is a historical development that will contribute to the reshaping of the world order in the coming decades, though it remains to be seen how India will project its preferred status. Historically, a rising power seeking higher status would act assertively, and this struggle for higher status might lead to conflict or even war in power transition.<sup>8</sup> The key issue today is whether the established powers will accommodate the increasing demands of a rising India. The nature and content of the international order in the decades ahead will depend in part on what roles the emerging powers decide to play.<sup>9</sup> Is India a challenger or a supporter of the existing global order? An essential element for a peaceful transition of power is transparency of intentions, which allows established powers to accept the assumption of a greater role by the rising power.<sup>10</sup> Signalling and recognition of India's status are therefore crucial. In international relations, status can be defined as 'collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)'.<sup>11</sup> Status signalling is a special type of information transmission that aims to change or maintain a special type of 'status belief' among relevant political actors.<sup>12</sup> A rising power could send various types of signals to demonstrate its preferred status. For instance, to indicate Great Power status, a rising power could build nuclear weapons and aircraft carriers, join major international organizations, and host the Olympic Games and other major sporting events. However, a rising power could also use 'strategic spinning' to demonstrate its preferred status through official statements and diplomatic speeches.<sup>13</sup>

At the individual level, a person 'spins' by telling a story to emphasize certain facts and link them together in ways that play to his advantage, while at the same time downplaying inconvenient facts. As a communicative act, political leaders might use spin to persuade their targeted audiences to accept one particular interpretation of social reality. Even if spinning might not necessarily send credible

<sup>8</sup> For a comprehensive review of power transition theory, see Jonathan M. DiCicco and Jack S. Levy, 'Power shifts and problem shifts: the evolution of the power transition research program', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43: 6, 1999, pp. 675–704. For a critique of power transition theory, see Steve Chan, *China, the US, and the power-transition theory* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Randall L. Schweller, 'Emerging powers in an age of disorder', *Global Governance* 17: 3, 2011, pp. 285–97; Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, 'After unipolarity: China's visions of international order in an era of US decline', *International Security* 36: 1, 2011, pp. 41–72.

<sup>10</sup> This is a deduction from power transition theory, according to which the international system is most dangerous when a rising power is rapidly catching up with the established powers and is also dissatisfied with the status quo. The distribution of power and the intentions of rising powers are crucial in shaping the power transition process. If those intentions are largely benign, the established powers may be able to accommodate the demands of rising powers peacefully. See DiCicco and Levy, 'Power shifts and problem shifts'.

<sup>11</sup> Deborah Welch Larson, T. V. Paul and William C. Wohlforth, 'Status and world order', in T. V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson and William C. Wohlforth, eds, *Status in world politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of 'status signalling' and its implications for international relations, see Xiaoyu Pu and Randall L. Schweller, 'Status signalling, multiple audiences, and China's blue-water naval ambition', in Paul et al., eds, *Status in world politics*, pp. 141–62.

<sup>13</sup> Spinning is often discussed in the domestic political context. See e.g. David Greenberg, *Republic of spin: an inside history of the American presidency* (New York: Norton, 2015). For a discussion of 'spinning' in international politics, see John J. Mearsheimer, *Why leaders lie: the truth about lying in international politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 17.

signals, it is still important in political life. If talks were all a waste of time, it would be hard to explain why politicians and diplomats bother to speak to each other at all. By 'talking' about its developing country status, a rising India highlights its shared identity with the 'Third World' for solidarity purposes.

While status signals are sometimes associated with material goods such as aircraft carriers and space programmes, status is fundamentally social and relational. Both in personal social life and in international society, status largely depends on recognition of and by others. It is an attribute that is primarily 'located' in other people's minds. No matter what kinds of attributes a state might have, they do not automatically constitute status. As status is social, sending and recognition of status signals can be viewed as an integrated process; thus, as International Relations theorist Robert Jervis points out, signalling and perceptions can be seen as 'two sides of the same coin'.<sup>14</sup> In other words, when a state sends signals about its preferred status, its leaders will often estimate how various audiences could potentially receive these signals. Rising powers such as India are especially sensitive about their status. Richard Lebow categorizes a particular group of countries as 'parvenu powers': these countries are psychologically insecure, and have a strong motive to show off their power and status. For India, historical trauma and national humiliation at the hands of western colonial powers might have constructed a post-colonial ideology that impels the country to strive for more power and status.<sup>15</sup> In addition, status signalling can serve a domestic political purpose, with leaders and political parties trying to use international status to boost their domestic legitimacy.

While India is striving to attain Great Power status, it is projecting multiple images on the global stage. According to Kate Sullivan, the ambiguity of India's image projection stems from its need to reconcile its quest for Great Power status with a desire to maintain solidarity with developing countries.<sup>16</sup> Accordingly, its strategy as a rising power includes elements of compliance with the existing order as well as elements of resistance to it.<sup>17</sup> India increasingly seeks Great Power status, with the concomitant special rights and privileges, but still claims to champion the principle of equality between states and is unwilling to abandon its long-term efforts to foster solidarity among developing countries.

Interestingly, while most studies assume a rising India will always strive for more recognition as a Great Power, India itself sometimes seems to complain that too much is made of its rise in the international system. Manjari Chatterjee Miller points out that some Indian elites shy away from any talk of the country's rising status, quoting one senior Indian official as saying: 'There is a hysterical sense, encouraged by the West, about India's rise.'<sup>18</sup> The general public in India, too,

<sup>14</sup> Robert Jervis, *The logic of images in international relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), p. xiii.

<sup>15</sup> Manjari Chatterjee Miller, *Wronged by empire: post-imperial ideology and foreign policy in India and China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> Kate Sullivan, 'India's ambivalent projection of self as a global power: between compliance and resistance', in Kate Sullivan, ed., *Competing visions of India in world politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 15.

<sup>17</sup> Sullivan, 'India's ambivalent projection of self as a global power', p. 16; Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, 'India's non-alignment conundrum: a twentieth century policy', *International Affairs* 91: 4, July 2015, pp. 747–64.

<sup>18</sup> Manjari Chatterjee Miller, 'India's feeble foreign policy', *Foreign Affairs* 92: 3, 2013, pp. 14–19.

might not always want their country to have a higher status. For instance, in 2004 the governing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) popularized the 'India Shining' slogan, developed as part of a campaign to promote India's positive image internationally. The government spent an estimated US\$20 million on advertisements featuring the 'India Shining' slogan. But the 'India Shining' campaign was one of the causes of the subsequent defeat of the Vajpayee government in the parliamentary elections in 2004 because the public disagreed with the message it promulgated.<sup>19</sup>

Sullivan emphasizes the uniqueness of India's struggle for status; I would argue, on the contrary, that India's double-aspected status struggle is not unique, reflecting as it does the interests and identity of a large developing country with a growing international profile. China is also striving for Great Power status while trying hard to maintain the image of a developing country.<sup>20</sup> Brazil, too, as a dominant player in South America, has always been afraid of being viewed as a hegemon. Thus, Brazilian diplomats try to promote Brazil's position through the notion of 'consensual hegemony', meaning that the country tries to play a leadership role through organizing multilateral dialogues rather than through explicit coercion.<sup>21</sup>

Given the multiplicity of status criteria in international society, a rising India could choose to project its preferred status in a variety of ways. Just as individuals and groups in a particular society achieve and signal status in various ways, so states have engaged in a wide range of activities to gain status. Traditionally, military capabilities have been a major mark of status in international politics; ideological appeal, economic growth and technological innovation can also be sources of international status and respect.<sup>22</sup> States that seek to establish a distinctive, positive national identity might choose different strategies to achieve status, including those of competition, emulation or creativity.<sup>23</sup> In the early years after their nation's independence, Indian elites downplayed the role of military power as a symbol of international status. In contrast to China's rapid quest for nuclear arms, India debated for more than two decades whether it should acquire such a weapon.<sup>24</sup> India demonstrated pride in its distinct status as a large developing country that championed non-violence, non-alignment and peaceful coexistence. Given India's attributes, it has tried to position itself as a 'synthesizing' power, located at a political and geographical centre point between West and East,

<sup>19</sup> BBC, 'BJP admits "India Shining" error', BBC News, South Asia, 28 May 2004, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/3756387.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/3756387.stm).

<sup>20</sup> Pu and Schweller, 'Status signalling, multiple audiences, and China's blue-water naval ambition'.

<sup>21</sup> Sean W. Burges, 'Consensual hegemony: theorizing Brazilian foreign policy after the Cold War', *International Relations* 22: 1, 2008, pp. 65–84.

<sup>22</sup> Randall L. Schweller, 'Realism and the present Great Power system: growth and positional conflict over scarce resources', in Ethan Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno, eds, *Unipolar politics: realism and state strategies after the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 43–7.

<sup>23</sup> Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, 'Status seekers: Chinese and Russian responses to US primacy', *International Security* 34: 4, 2010, pp. 63–95.

<sup>24</sup> Arun Prakash, 'Bridging historical nuclear gaps: the view from India', in Lora Saalman, ed., *The China–India nuclear crossroads* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), p. 16; Mahesh Shankar and T. V. Paul, 'Nuclear doctrines and stable strategic relationships: the case of South Asia', *International Affairs* 92: 1, Jan. 2016, pp. 1–20.

between global North and global South.<sup>25</sup> India has also tried to build an image as an 'exemplary power', promoting morality, non-coercion and democracy on the global stage;<sup>26</sup> and, on the basis of its identity as a synthesizing and non-coercive power, it has sought a distinct global role as an 'alternative power'.<sup>27</sup> Thus, while India has in fact built up its hard-power capabilities, it has tried to project an image that is different from that of the traditional western Great Powers.

In recent years, while emphasizing its sources of soft power, India has speeded up its pursuit of Great Power status. Together with Brazil, Japan and Germany, it has pressed for the creation of, and membership in, an expanded United Nations Security Council (UNSC). Its resolve to become a legitimate nuclear state was not deflected by the US and Chinese backlash provoked by the Indian nuclear weapons tests of 1998. Since coming to power in 2014, Prime Minister Modi has pursued an active diplomacy towards achievement of Great Power status, trying to strengthen India's security and economic cooperation with the United States and Japan, while also actively engaging with China. In regional affairs, India has always regarded south Asia as its sphere of influence and has tried to establish a dominant status in the region. India's struggle for regional leadership has complicated implications. India is very sensitive about any presence of external Great Powers in south Asia,<sup>28</sup> and views any Chinese attempt to strengthen its relationships with India's neighbours as threatening. Regarding maritime strategy, India considers itself the natural leader in the Indian Ocean and views any extra-regional naval presence, particularly that of China, as essentially illegitimate. Similarly, any military presence by other outside powers in its neighbourhood is viewed as illegitimate by India, whose elites assume that the countries of the region should rely exclusively on India as the predominant security provider.<sup>29</sup> India's positions regarding south Asian leadership are defensive from an Indian perspective, but such beliefs are not necessarily widely shared and recognized by other countries (including China).

In recent years, Modi has pursued a much more active diplomacy towards China, trying to maintain a balance between active cooperation and clear demonstration of resolve, and positively embracing the development of an economic partnership. During the Prime Minister's official visit to China in 2015, India signed investment deals worth US\$20 billion with Chinese companies.<sup>30</sup> Strategically, Modi tries to sustain a tough stance towards Beijing's military and diplomatic posturing. He has focused on consolidating India's periphery in south Asia, while building stronger relationships with the United States, Japan and a number of south-east Asian countries, with the aim of strengthening its bargaining position *vis-à-vis* China. Modi has also intensified his active diplomacy towards Chinese leaders and the Chinese public. He has hosted recent visits from both President Xi

<sup>25</sup> Sullivan, 'India's ambivalent projection of self as a global power', pp. 24–5.

<sup>26</sup> Sullivan, 'India's ambivalent projection of self as a global power', p. 27.

<sup>27</sup> Sullivan, 'India's ambivalent projection of self as a global power', p. 27.

<sup>28</sup> David Brewster, 'India and China at sea: a contest of status and legitimacy in the Indian Ocean', *Asia Policy* 22: 1, July 2016, pp. 4–10.

<sup>29</sup> Brewster, 'India and China at sea'.

<sup>30</sup> 'India and China sign deals worth \$22bn as Modi ends visit', BBC News, 16 May 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-32762930>.

and Premier Li Keqiang; and, in a friendly reciprocal gesture, Xi and Modi have visited each other's home towns. During Modi's formal visit to China, he also promoted India's public diplomacy and soft power. As a social media superstar among world leaders,<sup>31</sup> Modi became the first Indian prime minister to open an account with the Chinese social media platform Weibo, making an inaugural post that read: 'Hello, China! Looking forward to interacting with Chinese friends.'<sup>32</sup> During the same visit to China, Modi also participated in dialogues with students and business leaders, and his public diplomacy efforts were well received in the country's media.

The rising India, then, is sending different signals about its preferred status on the global stage. It wants to maintain developing country status while increasingly seeking Great Power status; and it is calculating how its signals might be received by multiple audiences. For instance, India is actively seeking a strategic partnership with the United States as a hedge against Chinese domination in Asia, but is hesitant about entering into a formal alliance. From New Delhi's perspective, closer cooperation with the United States will attract Chinese attention and improve India's profile and bargaining leverage in the eyes of Chinese elites, while a formal military alliance with the United States would provoke a Chinese backlash. Here the hesitancy in India's Great Power diplomacy is linked with how the country might be perceived by China, one of its key audiences in the global theatre.<sup>33</sup>

## **Chinese perceptions of a rising India**

How do India's audiences receive these various signals projected by India about its images and status? As noted above, status largely depends on recognition by others. Status politics is complicated in international relations: 'The process of signalling and recognizing status claims is at least as subject to uncertainty and complex strategic incentives as are the security politics with which scholars of international politics are familiar.'<sup>34</sup> When projecting various images on the global stage, India is facing multiple audiences, including the domestic population, the established powers in the West and the developing countries in the South.

China is one of India's key international audiences—and the two countries have a complicated relationship. In the 1950s, shortly after Indian independence and the advent of the communist regime in China, they had a brief period of warm friendship. Since then, unresolved territorial disputes and the 1962 war have cast a long shadow over the relationship. There has been some gradual

<sup>31</sup> Modi uses social media very frequently and he also has a huge number of followers at home and abroad. At the time of writing, November 2016, Modi's Twitter account has 24 millions followers.

<sup>32</sup> Niharika Mandhana, 'How India's Narendra Modi became a social media superstar', *Wall Street Journal*, 6 May 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/indias-prime-minister-a-hit-on-social-media-1430905148>.

<sup>33</sup> My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this causal link between India's Great Power diplomacy and China's perception. Of course, India has always hesitated to embrace formal alliances owing to its non-alignment tradition and its emphasis on strategic autonomy. There is thus an inherent limitation on Indian-American cooperation even without the China factor.

<sup>34</sup> William C. Wohlforth, 'Status dilemmas and interstate conflict', in Paul et al., eds, *Status in world politics*, pp. 115–40.

improvement since the 1980s, but mistrust and suspicion between the two countries persist. Some studies indicate that negative images of India are still strong among the Chinese public and elites. For instance, according to Mohan Malik, Chinese leaders such as Mao and Zhou perceived India as a 'Great Power dreamer', downplayed India's status, highlighted its vulnerability and disregarded its concerns.<sup>35</sup> And Simon Shen's study on Chinese public opinion identified negative views of India among Chinese nationalists.<sup>36</sup> Nevertheless, while these findings shed light on some troubling factors in the Sino-Indian relationship, they should be seen in the appropriate perspective. Malik's study examined the opinions of certain Chinese elites at a particular juncture in the Cold War when India and China had a particularly hostile relationship. These views cannot be simply transferred to the current era, in which the Sino-Indian relationship has evolved to a much more complex stage. Shen's study documented public opinion as professed on the Chinese internet, a platform on which exaggerated, ultra-nationalist opinions are often expressed; indeed, opinions posted online typically express extreme views, not even representing public opinion in a more general sense. Even if Chinese nationalist opinion matters in some respects, it is hard to imagine that these opinions could shape China's policy towards India in any significant way.

In contrast to these pessimistic views, I argue that Chinese perceptions of India are multidimensional and complex, and that the relationship is not dictated by zero-sum thinking. Chinese perceptions are shaped by India's status signals as well as China's identity and domestic calculations.<sup>37</sup> Just as India is sending out different signals about its preferred status, so China maintains an ambivalent attitude towards India. In particular, while having reservations regarding India's Great Power status, the Chinese embrace enthusiastically India's signals of developing country status. At the global level, China increasingly sees India as a potential global partner rather than as a significant threat. At the domestic level, Chinese debates about India's democratic system are more indicative of China's ideological divisions than of the intrinsic strength or weakness of India.

First of all, there is a fundamental asymmetry of power and perceptions between India and China.<sup>38</sup> The power gap between the two countries is still wide, despite India's rapid rise. While sharing some characteristics with India (both are large developing countries and emerging powers), China is more of an established power by virtue of its advantages both in material capabilities and with respect to positions in key international organizations. China's GDP is nearly four times that of India, and its standing army and nuclear stockpiles twice as large as those of India.<sup>39</sup> China has already gained entry into many 'Great Power clubs' that

<sup>35</sup> Mohan Malik, *China and India: Great Power rivals* (Boulder, CO: First Forum Press, 2011).

<sup>36</sup> Simon Shen, 'Exploring the neglected constraints on Chindia: analysing the online Chinese perception of India and its interaction with China's Indian policy', *China Quarterly* 207: 3, 2011, pp. 541–60.

<sup>37</sup> Nien-chung Chang Liao, 'The sources of China's assertiveness: the system, domestic politics or leadership preferences?', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 817–33.

<sup>38</sup> Swaran Singh, 'China and India: coping with growing asymmetry', *Asian Forum*, 19 Dec. 2014, <http://www.theasianforum.org/china-and-india-coping-with-growing-asymmetry/>.

<sup>39</sup> Singh, 'China and India: coping with growing asymmetry'.



India still aspires to join, and has played a leadership role in creating several new international institutions, such as the SCO and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).

Given the asymmetry of power and perception, China does not see India as a major threat. For instance, in a survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs in 2006, only 9 per cent of the Chinese public sampled identified India as a threat. The same survey showed 56 per cent of the Chinese public believing that China and India are mostly partners, with only 30 per cent seeing them as rivals.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, a substantial proportion of the Indian public see China as a major threat.<sup>41</sup> To some extent, then, the bilateral relationship is still a 'one-sided rivalry'.<sup>42</sup> Ten years on from the Chicago Council's survey, Chinese opinions on and perceptions of India have not changed much. From China's perspective, India could still pose challenges, but those challenges could be managed pragmatically. In comparison, China sees the United States as potentially posing a more serious threat to China's status and national interests. This is not surprising given that the United States has to date been the only superpower in the post-Cold War era. While wishing to avoid direct confrontation with the United States, China would prefer an alternative international order in which power would be more widely diffused, rather than concentrated in American hands.<sup>43</sup> A rising India, together with other emerging powers, would therefore serve China's long-term interest in shaping the emergence of a multipolar world. That is why Chinese leaders have adopted a forward-looking approach to India's rise and advocate greater cooperation within the BRICS grouping of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. China's official discourse often emphasizes cooperation and friendship between India and China, and there have been few reports in the Chinese media regarding Sino-Indian conflicts. Through this discourse, the Chinese public could be socialized into accepting the politically correct narrative of partnership and cooperation.

Asymmetry is an under-studied phenomenon that exists in many hierarchical systems, such as the patron-client relationship or the tribunal system in east Asian international relations.<sup>44</sup> However, it should be noted that the asymmetry between China and India involves a far more complex relationship than the hierarchical model can explain. In this relationship, which is not as lopsided as that between a

<sup>40</sup> Chicago Council on Global Affairs, *The United States and the rise of China and India: results of a 2006 multinational survey of public opinion*, 2006, [https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2006%20Full%20POS%20Report\\_o.pdf](https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/sites/default/files/2006%20Full%20POS%20Report_o.pdf).

<sup>41</sup> A large majority (83%) of the Indian public identifies China as a security threat. See Rory Medcalf, 'India poll 2013', Lowy Institute for International Policy, <http://www.loyyinstitute.org/publications/india-poll-2013>.

<sup>42</sup> Susan Shirk, 'One-sided rivalry: China's perceptions and policies toward India', in Francine R. Frankel and Harry Harding, eds, *The India-China relationship: what the United States needs to know* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp. 75-100.

<sup>43</sup> Jinghan Zeng and Shaun Breslin, 'China's "new type of Great Power relations": a G2 with Chinese characteristics?', *International Affairs* 92: 4, July 2016, pp. 773-94.

<sup>44</sup> Brantly Womack, *Asymmetry and international relationships* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016). The tribute system originally refers to a set of hierarchical structures that provided a framework for organizing relations between the Chinese empire and its neighboring states in ancient east Asia. Some scholars suggest that such a hierarchical framework could be applied in other contexts as well. See Yuen Foong Khong, 'The American tributary system', *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 6: 1, 2013, pp. 1-47.

dominant hegemon and its client state, asymmetry brings additional uncertainty and risks. While the power gap makes China less likely to see India as a threat, the asymmetry makes India more sensitive about Chinese actions, and also makes China sometimes less sensitive about India's concerns, for example—as India often complains—about the border disputes or about India's constant struggle for more status in international organizations. On the other hand, China sometimes complains that India is oversensitive, even paranoid, about its 'containment' strategy towards India, and that India has often overreacted to China's behaviour.<sup>45</sup> For instance, regarding India's recent failed attempt to join the NSG, the Chinese saw India's entry as a very complicated and nuanced situation that might need further deliberation within a wider international community, and denied that it was targeting India.<sup>46</sup> In contrast, Indians tended to see China as using the NSG issue to contain the rise of India.<sup>47</sup> After the Indian government decided to expel the three Chinese journalists, the dispute escalated. Chinese media and experts largely interpreted this as an example of India's overreaction.

There is a huge gap in China between the views of a rising India held respectively by the elites and by the general public. As noted above, Chinese leaders have tried to promote a positive narrative of the Sino-Indian relationship, emphasizing the two nations' shared identities as the two largest developing countries and two Asian civilizations, their common suffering at the hands of western colonial powers, and their grievances with and underrepresentation in western-dominated international institutions.<sup>48</sup> In recent years, too, Chinese leaders have emphasized the great potential for collaboration in multilateral forums between India and China as emerging powers and partners in global governance. Chinese leaders are well aware of the persistent disputes and competition between the two countries, but they tend to stress that these problems should be mitigated practically. At the level of the general population, by contrast, views of India are still subject to a degree of ignorance and stereotyping, as reflected in online expressions of opinion and in Chinese nationalistic media such as *Global Times*. However, it should be noted that the impact of nationalistic opinion is both limited and complex. The Chinese government shapes public opinion, but public opinion also constrains foreign policy. When the Chinese government wants to signal resolve to an international audience, it will allow or even encourage anti-foreign protests; when it wants to signal reassurance in diplomacy, it suppresses anti-foreign protest.<sup>49</sup> In recent years, the United States and Japan have from time to time been the

<sup>45</sup> John Garver, 'Asymmetrical Indian and Chinese threat perceptions', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25: 4, 2002, pp. 109–34.

<sup>46</sup> Haidar, 'India's NSG membership bid calls for in-depth discussion'.

<sup>47</sup> Roy, 'No entry in NSG'.

<sup>48</sup> For instance, public speeches by Chinese leaders emphasize these themes. See e.g. Li Keqiang, 'Seize the new opportunities in China–India strategic cooperation', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 22 May 2013, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/lkqipsg\\_665690/t1051164.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/lkqipsg_665690/t1051164.shtml); Xi Jinping, 'In joint pursuit of a dream of national renewal', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, PRC, 19 Sept. 2014, [http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/topics\\_665678/zjpcxshzzcygyslshdsschybdtjktmedfsllykdyxgsw/t1194300.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/topics_665678/zjpcxshzzcygyslshdsschybdtjktmedfsllykdyxgsw/t1194300.shtml).

<sup>49</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, 'Authoritarian signalling, mass audiences, and nationalist protest in China', *International Organization* 67: 1, 2013, pp. 1–35.

two major targets of China's anti-foreign protests,<sup>50</sup> while India has only rarely become a target.

At the sub-elite level (including intellectuals, policy advisers and media professionals), there are lively debates on India, which reflect China's domestic divisions more than Chinese perceptions of India. In other words, discussion about India among China's intellectuals and policy advisers is less about India than about China itself. One important debate is how China should see India's political economy and its potential. This debate originated in the work of a well-known overseas Chinese scholar, Yasheng Huang, a professor of Chinese political economy at MIT in the United States. In a *Foreign Policy* article published in 2003, Huang and his co-author suggested that 'India's homegrown entrepreneurs may give it a long-term advantage over a China hamstrung by inefficient banks and capital markets'.<sup>51</sup> Chinese scholars and journalists have debated this theme, the central question being whether India's democratic model of development is a viable alternative to China's autocratic model. Opinions are polarized on ideological lines. In general, Chinese liberals tend to praise the Indian model of development, while nationalists and conservatives belittle it. For Chinese liberals, India's democratic resilience and social pluralism stand in contrast to their own one-party rule and statist policies. They use India's rise as an example to reject the China model, stressing India's democracy as a key source of the durability of its development model.<sup>52</sup> Nationalists and conservatives focus on the well-known negative aspects of Indian society and politics, such as poor infrastructure and ineffective government. Dismissing the idea that India can surpass China, they see the positive evaluation of the Indian development model as ideologically biased.<sup>53</sup>

In recent years, India's fast economic growth and Modi's diplomatic activism have presented a new image of India in China, and have attracted increasing attention from Chinese scholars and analysts. The new trend is that Chinese analysts no longer look down upon India as a lightweight. Recent Chinese analyses increasingly regard India as a growing global actor rather than simply a regional power in south Asia. There are increasingly sophisticated analyses of India, and it can no longer be said that China's policy elites ignore India's profile and concerns. For instance, Chinese officials and scholars have recognized the various concerns India might have about Beijing's recently implemented 'one belt, one road' (OBOR) strategy, and are actively thinking about ways to mitigate them.<sup>54</sup> According to Lin Mingwang, a scholar and former diplomat based in New Delhi, China could ease India's concerns in several respects. His proposals include seeking compatible

<sup>50</sup> Jessica Chen Weiss, *Powerful patriots: nationalist protest in China's foreign relations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

<sup>51</sup> Yasheng Huang and Tarun Khanna, 'Can India overtake China?', *Foreign Policy* no. 137, July–August, 2003, p. 74.

<sup>52</sup> Ding Xueliang, 'Yingdu zhengzhi fazhang dui zhongde de qishi' [What China could learn from Indian political development], *Lilun Cankao*, no. 9, 2007, pp. 62–3.

<sup>53</sup> Yang Guangbin, 'Yizhong meiguoxintiao xia de yiloupiancha: Ping Huang Yasheng de zhongying Jinji bijiao' [Research on 'omitted bias' under the 'American creed'—comments on Professor Huang Yasheng's economic comparison between China and India], *Xueshuqianyan* 25: 5, 2014, pp. 86–95, <http://www.cnki.com.cn/Article/CJFDTotal-RMXS201405012.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Ferdinand, 'Westward ho'.

cooperation between OBOR and India's new regional initiatives, establishing informal multilateral dialogues, and demonstrating reassurance and restraint in the South China Sea disputes.<sup>55</sup>

## China's ambivalent accommodation

The West's accommodation of India's rise is based on democratic values, economic interests and strategic balancing. A rising India may possibly provide a counterweight to China, and this consideration has contributed substantially to the West's (and especially to America's) strategic accommodation with India.<sup>56</sup> The more difficult part of India's Great Power aspiration is whether it will be able to reach an accommodation with China.

In international politics, accommodation at the Great Power level is crucial to promoting peaceful change. According to T. V. Paul, Great Power accommodation involves mutual adaptation and acceptance by established and rising powers on their respective rights, status, institutional membership and spheres of influence in the international system.<sup>57</sup> Accommodation can be partial, and there can be different types of accommodation, including normative, territorial, economic and institutional.<sup>58</sup> While most studies focus on the accommodation between the rising powers and the established powers, relatively little attention has so far been paid to accommodation among rising powers. The Sino-Indian relationship is an example of how a more powerful rising power partially accommodates the rise of another rising power.<sup>59</sup> Some analysts argue that China is always trying to contain the rise of India; but in fact, containment is not an appropriate concept to apply to China's general approach to a rising India. Given the asymmetry of power and perception between India and China, I suggest that 'ambivalent accommodation' might be a better conceptualization. China's accommodation of India's status aspirations is partial, conditional and sometimes inconsistent. While Indian elites view China's accommodation of India's Great Power aspirations as a necessary condition for moving the bilateral relationship forward, Chinese elites see improvement in the relationship as a condition for China's greater acceptance of India's Great Power aspirations. Also, status politics between India and China is sometimes competitive but is not always a zero-sum game. While China does resist India's Great Power aspirations in some cases, it does not oppose those aspirations in principle. There is still much room for bilateral bargaining and mutual accommodation.

<sup>55</sup> Lin Mingwang, 'Yindu dui "yidaiyilu" de renzhi yu zhongg de zhengche xuanze' [India's perception of 'one belt, one road' and China's policy choices], *Shijie jingji yu zhengzhi*, no. 5, 2015, pp. 42–57.

<sup>56</sup> T. V. Paul and Mahesh Shankar, 'Status accommodation through institutional means: India's rise and the global order', in Paul et al., eds, *Status in world politics*, pp. 165–91.

<sup>57</sup> T. V. Paul, ed., *Accommodating rising powers past, present, and future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 4–5.

<sup>58</sup> Paul, *Accommodating rising powers*, pp. 17–18.

<sup>59</sup> China's international status is more consolidated than India's. In this sense, China is both a rising power and an established power. Most International Relations literature conceptualizes both China and India as rising powers.

China supports India's participation in some international institutions. It enthusiastically invited India to participate in several major economic initiatives, including the AIIB and OBOR.<sup>60</sup> The two sides have also strengthened their cooperation by jointly building the New Development Bank within the BRICS framework. India's rise will provide China with many opportunities for cooperation. Jairam Ramesh, a member of the Congress Party, has advocated the concept of 'Chindia', denoting synergy and cooperation between the two emerging powers.<sup>61</sup> Chinese leaders have embraced this idea, even though they may not use the term 'Chindia' itself. During his first official visit to India in 2013, Premier Li Keqiang said: 'As neighboring countries with the largest populations and greatest market potential, China and India are natural partners of cooperation.'<sup>62</sup> Highlighting the potential for China and India to develop a 'close partnership for development', President Xi said: 'Known respectively as the "factory" and "office" of the world, China and India need to enhance cooperation to tap into our mutually complementary advantages.'<sup>63</sup> From this perspective, economic cooperation between China and India might be the best way to build trust, leading to a durable peace between the two states. Many Chinese elites see the rise of India and China as a positive force. According to Xi, there is enough space for both nation-states to continue to grow and simultaneously achieve their aspirations of national revival. The Sino-Indian relationship has acquired a multidimensional character. While competition and disputes remain, India and China share many common interests on the global stage, including trade, technology transfers and the response to climate change. Despite the recent diplomatic rifts between the two countries, economic ties between them are growing in both strength and importance. China has been India's largest trading partner since 2008, and the two countries have embarked on a dialogue to resolve their longstanding political differences.

As noted above, India's signal of solidarity with other developing countries resonates well with Chinese elites. Not only do contemporary India and China share several key characteristics, as noted above; both have rich cultural traditions, and the two civilizations had extensive exchanges in ancient times, symbolized by the Chinese monk Xuanzang's legendary trip to India in the seventh century to learn about Buddhism. Today, India's rise is compatible with China's preference for a multipolar world, rather than a US-led unipolar system. As President Xi emphasized:

China and India, as two major players in the shaping of a multi-polar world and two vibrant forces driving Asian and global economic growth, have, once again, been brought to the forefront of the times. China-India relations have gone way beyond the bilateral scope and assumed broad regional and global significance.<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> India has become a founding member and the second largest shareholder of the Beijing-based AIIB. India has more reservations about OBOR.

<sup>61</sup> Jairam Ramesh, *Making sense of Chindia: reflections on China and India* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2005).

<sup>62</sup> Li, 'Seize the new opportunities'. It should be noted that Premier Li Keqiang chose India as the destination for his first official visit. This was one of several indicators that Chinese leaders value relations with India highly.

<sup>63</sup> Xi, 'In joint pursuit of a dream of national renewal'.

<sup>64</sup> Xi, 'In joint pursuit of a dream of national renewal'.

The shared identity and interests of India and China have created new space for cooperation in multilateral forums. During the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in December 2009, India and China coordinated their negotiating positions. At the UN, China and India often share similar political positions on a variety of policy issues. In contrast to conventional impressions, India and China share far more common foreign policy behaviours than either of them does with the United States.<sup>65</sup>

But China is also ambivalent about accommodating other aspects of India's Great Power aspirations. While India is eager to gain Chinese backing for its entry into key international organizations, China does not support these aspirations. During his speech at Tsinghua University in Beijing in 2015, Prime Minister Modi said:

China's support for India's permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council, and for India's membership of export control regimes like Nuclear Suppliers Group will do more than just strengthen our international cooperation. It will take our relationship to a new level. It will give Asia [a] stronger voice in the world.<sup>66</sup>

Some might argue that China has always sought to block India's entry into these major international organizations. For instance, Nicola Horsburgh argues that China often tries to delegitimize India's status as a nuclear power in order to protect its own status as the only Asian nuclear power.<sup>67</sup> However, it would be more accurate to characterize China's attitude towards India's entry into Great Power clubs as 'ambivalent accommodation' rather than 'containment' or 'blocking'. For instance, China initially hesitated to accept India as a new member of the SCO, but later enthusiastically embraced its entry and welcomed it into the group.<sup>68</sup> Regarding India's entry into the UNSC, the most authoritative statements of China's position have been consistently positive but not specific, as when President Xi said: 'China supports India in its aspiration to play a bigger role in the United Nations, including in the Security Council.'<sup>69</sup> A non-specific statement such as this may be considered unsatisfactory by many Indian officials, but it should be noted that Chinese leaders have never used such positive words to describe Beijing's position on Japan's aspiration to membership of the UNSC. In this sense, Chinese leaders have expressed generally positive feelings towards India's Great Power aspirations. But China's further and specific support might be conditional on the overall improvement of the Sino-Indian relationship as well as UNSC reform in a broader context.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>65</sup> George J. Gilboy and Eric Heginbotham, 'Double trouble: a realist view of Chinese and Indian power', *Washington Quarterly* 36: 3, 2013, pp. 125–42.

<sup>66</sup> 'PM Modi's speech at Tsinghua University, Beijing', *The Times of India*, 15 May 2015, <http://timesofindia.india-times.com/india/Read-full-text-PM-Modis-speech-at-Tsinghua-University-Beijing/articleshow/47295807.cms>.

<sup>67</sup> Nicola Horsburgh, 'Chinese views of a nuclear India: from the 1974 peaceful nuclear explosion to the Nuclear Suppliers Group waiver in 2008', in Sullivan, *Competing visions of India in world politics*, pp. 34–48.

<sup>68</sup> I thank Lin Mingwang for pointing this out.

<sup>69</sup> Xi, 'In joint pursuit of a dream of national renewal'.

<sup>70</sup> According to one Chinese scholar and former diplomat, India's efforts to enter the UNSC as a group with three other countries (Brazil, Germany and Japan) also poses a challenge for China, which has clearly opposed Japan's entry. See Zhang Jiadong, 'Zhong yin guanxi de wenti yu chaoyue' [Tangle and untangle in Sino-India relations], *Journal of China's Neighboring Diplomacy* 3: 1, 2016, p. 172, <http://www.jikan.com.cn/article/534513.html>.

India and China both want to increase their status on the global stage, and such politics is competitive. Most Sino-Indian competition over status is not a zero-sum game, as typically it involves 'club goods' rather than 'positional goods'.<sup>71</sup> Only if status is regarded as a scarce positional good in some absolute sense will status competition be a zero-sum game.<sup>72</sup> In terms of club goods, the fact that one state gains status does not imply that another state will absolutely lose status. A club is 'a voluntary collective that derives mutual benefits from sharing one or more of the following: production costs, the members' characteristics, or an impure public good characterized by excludable benefits'.<sup>73</sup> There is often some element of rivalry for the benefits of club goods, owing to congestion or crowding. In social life as in international politics, members of elite groups might restrict membership to preserve their status and privileges.<sup>74</sup> In this sense, there could be competition for status as a club good. However, if more states join a club that does not rob the existing member states of their status, it is not a zero-sum game. Power clubs in international politics include the club of the western industrialized economies (the G7) and that of the permanent five members of the UNSC. If we accept that status politics is both competitive and not a zero-sum game, it is not surprising that China accommodates India's striving for more status only partially and with hesitation. From China's perspective, a 'conditional engagement with India' is preferable to open confrontation. India's entry into some Great Power clubs might detract from the privileges of China as an existing member of these clubs, but will not eliminate those privileges. China has no reason to view India's rise as a zero-sum game, and its ambivalent response might be attributable to substantial policy disputes rather than to intrinsic status competition. The persistence of mutual suspicions makes it difficult for New Delhi and Beijing to establish a real strategic partnership in the short term. However, it is important for the two countries to cooperate further and exchange more information, so as to reduce misunderstanding and enhance mutual trust.

While China is hesitant to accommodate India in some respects, its ambivalence does not constitute a containment strategy. Some of China's ambivalence reflects its specific concerns for its own security and interests. India is a crucial player on the issue of Tibet and has unresolved border disputes with China. Beyond these traditional issues, there are also some emerging security concerns for Beijing. For instance, both China and India are expanding their naval power, and there could be more naval competition between the two countries. Many Chinese elites, while recognizing India's aspiration to be a Great Power, do not recognize its right to exclude a Chinese presence from the Indian Ocean.<sup>75</sup> Few Chinese analysts appear to have a deep understanding or recognition of the depth of Indian sensitivity about China's presence in south Asia and in the Indian Ocean. In other words,

<sup>71</sup> Todd Sandler, *Collective action: theory and applications* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992).

<sup>72</sup> Fred Hirsch, *Social limits to growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 27.

<sup>73</sup> Hirsch, *Social limits to growth*, p. 63.

<sup>74</sup> For a study of elite club membership in social life, see Lauren Rivera, 'Status distinctions in interaction: social selection and exclusion at an elite nightclub', *Qualitative Sociology* 33: 3, 2010, pp. 229–55.

<sup>75</sup> Ji You, 'China's emerging Indo-Pacific naval strategy', *Asia Policy* 22: 1, July 2016, pp. 11–19.

China's strategists do not challenge India's special interests and roles in the Indian Ocean, but they believe that the Chinese Navy must have the right to share the responsibility of protecting Indian Ocean sea lines of communications.<sup>76</sup> As part of its aspirant Great Power diplomacy, India has strengthened its strategic cooperation with the United States, Japan and several south-east Asian countries. These activities arouse fear in Chinese strategists, who see India taking a strategic direction towards building a potential 'anti-China club' in the region. Ironically, this anxiety increases the salience and profile of India in the eyes of Chinese strategists.

## **Conclusion**

As two rising Great Powers, India and China will contribute substantially to shaping the future of the international order in the twenty-first century. While the West, for various reasons, has largely welcomed India's rise, China's response has been far more ambivalent. China is a key international audience of a rising India. A hostile rivalry between the two countries is sure to derail the aspirations of both to sustain their economic development. China and India have real incentives to prevent such a tragic outcome from becoming a reality.

As a rising power and one of the world's largest developing countries, India is sending out contradictory signals about its preferred status on the global stage. While striving to achieve Great Power status, it also claims to maintain a traditional version of developing country solidarity. India's rising strategy, like that of other emerging powers, includes both elements of compliance with the existing order and elements of resistance to it. Almost all of the BRICS countries have a similar attitude towards the existing international order, as they both benefit from it and are dissatisfied with it. They are largely reformers of the existing order rather than revisionists who advocate an entirely new order.

A rising India could choose a variety of tactics to project its preferred status. In earlier phases since independence, Indian elites downplayed the role of hard military power as a symbol of international status; India was proud of its distinct status as a large developing country that championed non-violence, non-alignment, and peaceful coexistence. More recently, while continuing to emphasize its distinctive sources of soft power, India has strengthened its efforts to gain Great Power status by building hard-power capabilities. Indian leaders, especially Prime Minister Modi, have engaged in energetic Great Power diplomacy. India today is actively working to strengthen its security and economic cooperation with the United States and Japan while also pursuing engagement with China. Regionally, India has always regarded south Asia as its sphere of influence and tried to establish a dominant status here. Internationally, India has been trying to enhance its influence and status in major international institutions.

As one of India's key competitors and partners, China accommodates India's rise partially and ambivalently. This ambivalent attitude is shaped both by India's

<sup>76</sup> You, 'China's emerging Indo-Pacific naval strategy', pp. 11–19.



complicated status signals, and by China's own identity and domestic political landscape. India's solidarity signals about developing country status are well received by Chinese elites, as Chinese leaders have tried to develop Sino-Indian cooperation in a broad global context. India's diplomatic activism has raised its image in the eyes of China's policy elites in particular. Reactions to India's democratic model have been mixed, largely reflecting China's domestic debates rather than India's actions and policies. China is still hesitant about accommodating India's Great Power aspirations for a number of reasons. However, status competition between India and China is not always a zero-sum game, as it generally relates to 'club goods' rather than 'positional goods'. In other words, India's entry into some Great Power clubs might have an impact on China's privileges as an existing member, but will not eliminate its membership or obliterate its associated rights. China's ambivalence is more likely to derive from the long-term distrust and ongoing disputes between the two countries than from the intrinsic status competition. For decades China and India have looked at each other with a mixture of apathy and suspicion. Mistrust and competition still exist, and the asymmetrical perceptions of power and status continue to shape the trajectories of the relationship. The difference in Chinese and Indian elite perceptions of one another might introduce greater uncertainty into the future of the relationship: China may underestimate Indian concerns, while India may exaggerate the threat posed by China. But as a general trend, China largely views India's rise as a positive development. If the two Asian giants put more emphasis on economic development and diplomatic cooperation than on their political differences, India's rise will be further accommodated and welcomed by China as the two powers together shape the emergence of a multipolar world.

