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People's Republic of China at Sixty

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The sixty gun salute fired on October 1, 2009 to honour 60th anniversary of the declaration of People's Republic of China and the spectacular show combining parade of military technology and colorful culture troupe showcased great accomplishments to the global community. Several heads of states including Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has conveyed warm greetings to the people and government of PRC on this momentous occasion.

For an ancient civilization like China, a span of 60 years may not be a big period in its history. However, the spectacular economic growth and rising stature as a global power merits acclaim. The PRC's history can be broadly divided into Mao (1949-1978) and post-Mao (1978-2009) period. To understand the whole experience, the paper takes an overview of patterns of development and foreign relations in China.

1949-1978, Mao's Period

Mao's famous speech "Chinese people have stood up against colonialism and imperialism on October 1, 1949 has been well documented and could be compared with Nehru's "tryst with destiny" speech for the lasting impact, both speeches have shown to the people of respective countries.

Economic success primarily depends on political will of the leadership.

Different from the Marxist discourse, rural people of China especially the peasantry had played most important role in the success of communist revolution of 1949. End of imperialism, establishment of planned economy, land reform and the establishment of commune system were some of the main characteristics of the new system that aimed to create an egalitarian society based on equity and social justice. Nobel laureates Amartya Sen acknowledges that despite poor economic growth during Mao's era, real achievement in China were seen in the field of land reforms, education system, health and social security programmes that were amply supported by the government. The development experience during Mao's era even influenced attempts to theories -basic need first approach in the development literature. However, a large number of deaths during the great famine (1958-61), prolonged period of domestic upheavals and turbulence during Cultural Revolution (1966-77) were serious setbacks during the Mao's period.

At the international level, the world was divided into two camps. In the early 1950s, China was part of the Socialist camp and the Chinese foreign policy emphasized the principle contradiction between United States and the Soviet Union. However, the world at large mainly non-Socialist countries were apprehensive about the intention of the authoritarian state. In 1954, India and China signed historic Panchsheel agreement (the famous Five Principle of Peaceful Coexistence) as a guideline for state to state relationship, which visualized a suitable framework for China to break from its isolation and play a meaningful role. However, domestic political upheavals during Cultural Revolution resulted in making foreign policy peripheral and isolation became more evident. Moreover in 1972, China and US signed the Shanghai Communiqué in 1972 which signified a shift in China's foreign policy and this paved the way for several European states to recognize the PRC.

1978-2009, Post- Mao Era

During the post-Mao era, Deng Xiaoping emerged as the supreme leader of China in the late 1970s. Deng initiated bold economic -reform and opening up policy. The theory of -socialism with Chinese characteristics-

aimed to create comfortable material life for the people. The reforms started in rural China through the implementing Household Responsibility System which raised efficiency in agriculture and increased income of people in 1980s and 1990s. Rural industries popularly known as Township and Village Enterprises also witnessed high growth and began providing employment to the masses thus raising income of rural people which was termed by Deng Xiaoping as 'surprise force'. In Urban China, industrial reforms which included establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) were a big success making China 'the manufacturing hub of the world'. Today, Chinese economy, ranks third in the world (after US and Japan), its GDP is pegged at 4.40 trillion dollar (2008) which is 77 times more than what was in 1952 (after deducting price rise factor).

China is the fastest growing economy of the world and has witnessed an average above nine percent growth during last 30 years. The growth has created wealth in the country both in urban and rural area but in vary levels. However, the distribution of growth has not been fair. Problems like economic and social inequality, regional disparity, rural crisis, unemployment, corruption, ethnic tension is cause of concern of the current leadership. The leadership has given priority to programmes such as 'scientific development' and 'building a harmoniums society' that emphasize balanced development among groups and regions of China.

Market oriented reforms has also brought about significant changes in the structure and dynamics of the Chinese society. The emergence of new groups like rich peasants and private entrepreneurs are an outcome of reforms. The rise of middle class in China is also a recent phenomenon. According to some estimates by 2025 the middle class would be more than 500 million. Correspondingly, there is a rise in the number and activities of civil society organizations that are engaged in environment, business and culture. The number and reach of media has widened. It is now acceptable to publish opinion on issues like good governance, corruption and environmental degradation. Also, the telecommunication revolution has connected Chinese people with the world through telephone and internet. The number of mobile

phone subscribers in China reached 601 million, while 298 million people (2008) have the access to the internet.

A peaceful domestic and international environment was critical for economic reforms in post-Mao period. It signified a change in foreign policy primarily because of the compulsion of domestic economy. From the 1980s friendly relations with other countries, particularly neighbours have been a priority of China's foreign policy formulations. The collapse of Soviet Union and the end of Cold War in the 1990s facilitated a change in power relations. Economic liberalization and better bilateral relations have proved conducive to China's rise. However, the world has also witnessed problems like terrorism, climate change and pandemics which are transnational in character. While Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence remain the guiding principle of China's foreign policy, multilateralism is increasingly being emphasized to tackle emerging transnational problems.

India and China are largest Asian countries with more than one third of the world population. The bilateral, regional and global significance of India-China relationship is enormous. Addressing a gathering in January 2008 at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing, Indian PM Manmohan Singh said 'we must ensure that India and China cooperate in creating a world of positive externalities and mutual prosperity' simultaneous development will have a positive influence not only on our economies but also on the rest of the world. The comprehensive expansion of bilateral relations including strategic partnership, rising volume of trade, emerging cooperation at bilateral and multilateral forum, desire to solve boundary issue peacefully, demonstrate the will of two states to shape their destiny in Asia and the world.

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