India-China Bilateral Relations: Confrontation and Conciliation

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India-China Bilateral Relations: Confrontation and Conciliation

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Abstract

India and China are rising giants of Asia. Both are world's most populous countries and fastest growing major economics. The far-reaching growth in China and India's global diplomatic and economic influence has also enhanced the significance of their bilateral relationship. China and India are two of world's oldest civilizations and have co-existed in peace for millennia. Both countries have effectively tried to reignite cultural, diplomatic and economic ties. China has emerged as the largest trading partner of India and two countries have tried to expand their strategic and military relations. The economic relation between two countries is considered to be one of the most significant bilateral relations in the current global economic scenario and this trend is expected to go on in the years to come.

Keywords: India, China, bilateral relations, international economics, political economy

JEL Classification Codes: B15, F5, F20, P16

Introduction

Since the first century A.D. both the nations had wide ranging cultural contact with the spread of Buddhism from India to China. Two countries had conflict of interests in Tibet. At the end of its civil war in 1949, China wanted reassert control over Tibet and to set free the Tibetan people from Lamaism and Feudalism by the use of arms in 1950. To avoid antagonizing china, Nehru communicated Chinese leaders that India had not any political, territorial interests or to seek special principles in Tibet. With Indian support, Tibetan delegates signed an agreement in May 1951 recognizing Chinese sovereignty assuming that the existing political and social system in Tibet would carry on. In ending the Korean War (1950-53), direct negotiation between two Asian giants started supported by India's mediatory efforts. In 1954, India China signed an eight years agreement in Tibet that lay out the foundation of their relationship in the form of *Panchasheela*. The slogan in 1950s was Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai (brother).

Both the nations are engaged in a constructive dialogue on a number of issues, including political, economic, cultural and military co-operation. There is much substantive interaction between two governments, much deeper understanding of each other's positions on key issues and much more acknowledgment of common objectives. With growing economic and commercial ties, there is physical connectivity as well as unprecedented flow of ideas. Since the beginning of new century, the China-India strategic and co-operative partnership for peace and prosperity has continued to grow rapidly. The year 2011 was the year of China-India exchanges. Both the nations with a combined population of 2.5 billion have joined together and worked together to move forward their companionship and collaboration. Sensitivity of each other's concern has become a base for deepening bilateral relations in between two nations.

Political Relations

The China-India relationship can be traced back to the second century B.C. Fahien and HuenTsang, two famous Chinese Buddhist monks had come to India to learn Buddhist scriptures. The Indian monk, Buddh-Dharma came to China to establish Chan sect. China and India had amicable contacts in the early 1950s. There was exchange of visits between Nehru, Indian Prime Minister and Zhou Enlai, Chinese premier. The famous five principles of peaceful co-existence were made by dint of joint efforts of both leaders. In 1960, Premier Zhou went to India to have a discussion on boundary dispute. Ultimately in 1962, India started an armed attack against China along with China-India border areas. This led to cold period of bilateral relations. In 1976, both the nations took steps for the exchange of ambassadors. In 1979, Mr. Vajpayee, the then External Affairs Ministers visited China and Mr. Huang Hue, the then foreign minister visited India in 1981. In 1984, two sides signed a trade agreement. The visit of Rajiv Gandhi in the end of 1988 witnessed the establishment of joint working group on boundary questions, joint committees on economics, trade, science and technology and civil aviations.

The visit of Premier Li Peng to India in 1991 saw the signing of consular treaty for the establishment of consulate generals, memorandum on resuming border trade and co-operations in science and technology. In the early 1993, the Chinese Consulate General in Mumbai and Indian Consulate General in Sanghai were re-opened. An agreement was signed between two nations during the period of Narasimha rao's visit to China in the maintenance of peace and tranquility in the Sino-India border areas, environment, radio, T.V, opening in more border trade points. During the visit of Indian vice-President K.R Narayanan to China and Mr. Qian Qichen, Chinese foreign minister to India, two countries signed agreement an avoiding double taxations, co-operation on health and medical, banking co-operation simplifying the procedure of visa applications. At the end of 1996, President Jiang Zemin paid a visit to India for the establishment of a constructive partnership on basis of five principles of peaceful co-existence towards 21st century and strengthening mutual support on international issues. In 1999, during the period of Jaswant Singh, the then External Affairs Minister of India, both countries affirmed that other side should not treat other as a threat, entering into the process of improvement and development. In March 2000, officials from foreign ministers of two countries held the first round of security dialogue. Both sides reached consensus in furthering bilateral relations. In January 2001, Mr. Li Peng, Chairman of standing committee of NPC during his official visit to India held talks with India's Prime Minister and president for reaching a board consensus on regional and international issues of common concern. Thus the Sino-Indian relationship came into the road of all round improvement and development.

Premier Zhu Rongji visited India in Jan, 2002. In June 2003, A.B. Vajpayee, the then Prime Minister of India had visited China where a declaration on principles for relations and comprehensive cooperation was signed. They concluded a broader trade protocol to add a border crossing between Sikkim and Tibet Autonomous Region. The Prime Ministers of both countries appointed special representatives to explore the political perspective on the framework of a boundary settlement. In the year April, 2005, a joint statement was signed between premier Wen and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh for establishing a strategic and co-operative partnership for peace and prosperity. In November, 2006, Chinese President visited India and both sides issued a joint declaration containing a ten-pronged strategy to stabilize co-operation in all areas. During the visit of Dr. Singh to China on 13-15 Jan, 2008, a joint document entitled "A shared vision for 21st century of the Republic of India and People's Republic of China" was issued, outlining of international and bilateral issues. Dr. Singh also visited China in Oct, 2008 to participate in the 7th Asia-Europe summit held in Beijing on 24th and 25 October. The Indian President Mrs. Patil had attended the reception to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations jointly organized by CPAFFC and the Embassy of India.

While paying a three days visit to India by Chinese premier Wen Jiabao from 15-17 Dec, 2010, six agreements were signed on cultural exchange, green technologies, media exchanges, hydrological data and banking. During the visit, a bilateral trade target of 100 billion USD was set to be reached by 2015. A strategic economic dialogue and CEO forum were established and 2011 was declared as year of "India-China Exchange". The External affairs Minister S.M Krishna again visited China from 5-8 April 2010 and attended a reception to mark the 60th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic

relations. In Sept, 2011, External affairs Minister met with Chinese Foreign Minister as part of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) meeting on the sidelines of UNGA (United Nations General Assembly). Both ministers instituted dialogues mechanisms on issues relating to counter-terrorism, policy planning, security, water resources, judiciary, science and technology, audit, personnel, finance, labour etc. There was expansion of exchanges at the government levels, parliamentary and party levels. There are regular party-to-party exchanges between CPC (Communist Party of China) and political parties in India¹.

China does not accept Arunachal, POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir) and Indian J&K (Jammu and Kashmir) as sovereign Indian territory. Beijing claims the entire Arunachal Pradesh as its territory and the entire Kashmir disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Till recently, China held Sikkim as an independent country under illegal occupation. The current India-China scenario is very different from 1962. China has emerged as a major economic, political and military power. China realizes that India has also risen as a strong power and will continue to grow. It has acquired its status in G-8 and G-20ⁱⁱ. Both have made some efforts to generate a positive atmosphere for the 15th round of negotiations on boundary dispute that began nearly a decade ago but have meandered among a series of diplomatic skirmishes in recent years. National Security advisor Shivshankar Menon showed up at the Chinese embassy in Delhi to underline the strong commitment of the UPA government to elevate the bilateral relationship with china.

On Jan 16 and 17, 2012, the 15th round China-India special Representatives Talks on boundary Issues was held in New Delhi. Chinese special representative, state councilor Dai Bingguo and National Security advisor Shivshankar Menon had made an in-depth discussion on border issues of both nations. During the meeting, representatives of both governments signed Agreement in the establishment of a working mechanism for consultation and coordination on India-China border affairs. Keeping the profound changes of current international system in new, both sides have to strive to expand co-operation, strengthen coordination and push forward China-India strategic partnershipⁱⁱⁱ.

Cultural Relations

China and India are noted for their old cultures which bear the characteristic of harmony. The hundreds of Chinese scholars were the students of famous Nalanda University. The Chinese scholars had participated in Buddhist congregations ahead of others. In ancient times, the Indian scholars like Dharmaratha, Kumarajiva, Buddhajiva, Dharmakshema and Sangabhati visited India and the Chinese scholars like Fa-hein, Sung-yun, and Hieuen Tsang came to India. Being an inseparable part of India, Huentasng and Fa-hein had enriched the Indian History by their writings^{iv}.

The Mahabharata refers to China several times, including a reference to the present brought by Chinese at the Rajasuya Yagna of the Pandavas; also, the Arthasastra and Manusmriti mentions China. Fighting without weapons was a specialty of Kshyatriyas warriors of India. Both Arnold Toynbee and Sir L. Wooley speak of readymade culture coming to China. That was the Vedic culture of India. The amicable relationship of both the nations is further nurtured by close historical and religious ties of Buddhism, introduced to China by Indian monks at a very early stage of their respective histories. The Chinese literature of third century is full of geographic and mythological elements derived from India^v. Hinduism, Buddhism, both have deep influence on religious and cultural existence of China. The civilization dialogue between India and China would be seen in three aspects of Chinese civilizations: architecture, temple building, sculpture, paintings and creative Arts^{vi}.

Both nations are of an extensive land with multitudinous people. The soils of two countries are fertile. The people are honest and industrious. The products of the soil and outputs of the labour are sufficient not only to maintain their national existence but also to contribute to international affluence. During the visit of the then Indian Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee, 2003 to China, both sides agreed to set up Cultural centers in each other's capitals and will facilitate their establishment. According to Executive Programme of Cultural Exchanges, the exchanges and co-operations between two nations in the field of arts and culture, education, social science, mass Medias, youth affairs and sports was strengthened^{vii}. The Chinese generally regard R.N Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi as the

modern Buddha's of India. Tagore works in English have been mostly translated into Chinese and the poems of "Stray Birds" and "The Crescent Moon" have created a new style of prosody in Chinese poetry at present. The Crescent Moon Society and a Crescent Moon Magazine are founded and directed by Dr. H.V Shih, in the fond and loving memory of Great poet philosopher's visit to China. Now is the ripe time to continue and fortify their relationship^{viii}.

The trade routes between India and China were long and hazardous, requiring two years to negotiate. Later on, the sea routes gained popularity with improvement in ship building and membership. There was an important sea link through South East Asia. A number of Indian states served as an intermediary state for further spread of Indian culture and Buddhism to China. Canton had become a prosperous port and from seventeen century onwards, the most important landing place for Buddhist monks arriving from India. The Chinese monks started in India famous centre of learning in India, like University of Taxila and Nalanda. It is often realized "that even such a central term in Chinese culture as Mandarin is derived from a Sanskrit word, namely Mantra which went from India to China via Malaya". Some Chinese scholars tried to introduce Sanskrit phonetics into the Chinese language.

The University of Nalanda built in the 4th century B.C was one of greatest achievements of ancient India in the field of education. The Chinese scholar and traveler Hieuen Tsang (600-654 AD) stayed at Nalanda University in the 7th century and has made a detailed description of excellence and purity of monastic life practiced here. He found Indians "high minded, upright and honorable" Many Indian classics have been preserved in Chinese translation relating not only to Buddhism but also to Hinduism, astronomy, mathematics, medicine etc. There used to be frequent co-operation between Indian, Chinese and Tibetan scholars. A notable instance of this co-operation is a Sanskrit-Tibetan-Chinese dictionary of Buddhist technical terms "ii. China and India are expected to take a great leap forward in their relationship, with Beijing inviting the Shankaracharya of Karachi. This trip is now described as a "civilization journey", adding a new dimension to modern days contact between two Asian giants "iii".

The latest cultural exchange programme was signed in Dec, 2010 during the visit of Wen Jiabao to India for co-operation in cultural fields including exchanges of visits of performing artists, officials, writers, archivists and archaeologists, organizing cultural festivals etc. In April 2005, a MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) was signed between two governments to build an Indian Style Buddhist Temple in the International Garden on the west side of white Horse Temple in Luoyang, Henan province. Indian president Mrs. Pratibha Patil inaugurated the temple in May, 2010.

During the visit of Indian External Affairs minister in June 2008, a joint stamp release ceremony was held in Beijing; one of the stamps depicted the Mahabodhi temple Bodh Gaya, while the other stamp depicted the White Horse Temple of Luoyang city. A centre for Indian studies was inaugurated in Peking University in June 2003. During the visit of Dr. Singh in Jan, 2008, the Indian Medical Mission to China was flagged off .Ten doctors from India visited China and a team of Chinese doctors went to India in Jan, 2008. A memorandum of understanding was signed in Beijing in April 2009 by the governments of India and China to organize the festival of India in China and festival of China in India in 2010. A Kathak dance teacher joined the mission on Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) deputation to hold classes for dance students. The wing conducts Lectures, documentary shows, performances dealing with Indian culture and heritage. The wing has also an open library with around 3000 references books in India. The Indian mission in Beijing and consulates in Sanghai and Guangzhou actively organize Indian cultural events with the support of local organizations throughout the year. Indian troops have also participated in the recent multilateral events in China like The Asian Games in Guangzhou (2010), The Asia Arts Festival in 2008 (Zhengzhou) and 2009 (Ordos), organized annually by the Chinese Ministry of Culture^{xiv}.

Defense Co-operations

A joint working group was established on boundary issue in Dec, 1998 after Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China. The confidence building measures were undertaken to reduce tensions on the borders between 1988-1993. In July 1992, Sri Sarad Power visit to Beijing culminated to develop academic, scientific,

military and technological exchanges. Recent highlights in defense relations are the visit by the then Defense minister, Mr. George Fernandez, to China, in April 2003 which helped to ease the past Pokharan tensions.

This was followed by return visit by a Chinese defense minister Gen Cao Gangchuan in March 2004. In Dec, 2004, Gen NC Vij, the then Chief of the Army Staff India (COAS) visited China, the first by an Indian COAS visited in a decade, and both countries agreed to deepen defense co-operation. In 2005, the Chinese Chief of General Staff (CGS) visited India, a further sign of warming relation between two countries. The Chinese defense minister visited India in May 2006 and signed the first ever MoU in defense exchanges between Armed forces of India and China. In May 2007, General JJ Singh, Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and COAS visited China. In Nov, 2008, the chief of Air staff of IAF paid an official visit to China from 02 to 05 Nov, 2008. Chairman COSC and The Chief of Naval Staff (CNS), Admiral Suresh Mehta, Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM), Ati Vishisht Seva Medal (AVSM) visited China and participated in International Fleet Review to mark the 60th Anniversary celebrations of The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) from 19-25 April 2009 xv.

The first Annual Defense dialogue between two nations was conducted in Beijing in Nov, 2007. Indian side was led by Sri Bimal Julka, JS (G/Air), Ministry of Defense (MOD) while the Chinese side was led by Major General Qian Li Hua, chief of Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) of the Ministry of National Defense (MND). The second round of Annual Defence Dialogue was held in India on 15 Dec, 2008. The third round of Defense Dialogue held in Beijng on 6th Jan, 2010. The Indian side was led by General Ma Xiaotian, Deputy Chief of General staff. The fourth Annual Defense dialogue was held in New Delhi in 9thDec, 2011. Sri Shasikant Sharma, Defence Secretary and Gen Ma Xiaotian, Dy CGS Co-chaired the talks. Both sides agreed to increase the defense exchanges between two countries and enrich the content of the exchanges.

The important high level visit that took place from India to China in the year 2011 were by an India multi-command delegations led by Maj Gen Gurmit Singh, VSM from 19-23 Jun and 15 members staff officers delegations led by Air vire Marshal PS Mann from 09-14 Jan 2012. An eight member PLA delegations led by Lt Gen Lang Youliang, political commissar of Tibet provincial military command visited India from 04-09 Nov, 2011. Another 26 member PLA staff officer Delegations visited Delhi, Agra, and Mumbai, from 25-30 Dec 2011. It was headed by Maj Gen Jin Lecheng, Deputy Commander, Shanxi provincial military command. All exchanges are meant to deepen and institutionalize defense co-operations. The bilateral exchanges between two countries are increasing with defense delegations^{xvi}.

Economic Relations

During the visit of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi to China, a ministerial level dialogue mechanism was established in 1988 for economic relations, trade, science and technology. To examine the potential complementarities between two nations in respect of trade and economic cooperation, a joint study group was constituted. As per its recommendations, a Joint Task Force was set up to study the feasibility of an All India Regional Trading Arrangement. There were also joint working groups on Trade, Agriculture and Energy. In Dec 2010, both countries agreed to set up the India China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (SED). The first SED took place in Beijing in Sept 26, 2011xvii. The Indian side was led by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, Deputy Chairman, planning Commission, while the Chinese side was led by Mr. Zhang Ping, chairman, National Development and Reforms Commission. The SED is a forum to discuss strategic macro-economic issues impacting both nations as result of changing international economic and financial landscape, to handle challenging domestic economic issues and to identify specific fields for enhancing co-operation, learning and experience sharing. The 12th plan priorities of both the nations, monetary and investment policies of both countries, policies on energy conservation and environment protection were also included in SED included introductions. During 8th JEG meeting held in Beijing, Jan 19, 2010, the Commerce Ministers of two sides agreed to work towards a more balanced trade. Mr. Cheng Deming

assured that China would import more from India. The 9^{th} Session of India-China Joint Economic Group (JEG) is to take place in India xviii .

Many Indian companies have initiated setting up Chinese operations to service both their Indian and multinational corporation (MNC) clientele in China. The leading Indian banks such as State Bank of India (Shanghai), Bank of India (Shenzhen), Canara bank (Shenghai) and Bank of Baroda (Guangzhou) have branches in China. The State Bank of India has empowered to conduct RMB denominated business. More Indian banks are planning to upgrade their representative offices in China to Branch offices and existing branch offices are applying for RMB license. In early 2011, Industrial and Commercial bank of India (ICBC) secured a license to start banking operations in India .ICBC inaugurated their Mumbai branch in Sept 15, 2011.

India China trade for Jan-Oct, 2011 stood at US\$ 60.58 billion, recording an increase of almost 22 percent, India's exports to china for Jan-Oct, 2011 reached US\$ 18.89 billion, a growth of more than 11 percent when compared to the same period in 2010. China exports to India for Jan-Oct, 2011 reached US\$ 41.68 billion, recording an increase of almost 27percent compared to Jan-Oct, 2010. Iron ores, cotton and Yarn, Fabric, copper precious stones, organic chemicals, plastic, salt, sulfur, stone, machinery, reactors, and boilers continued to dominate the Indian export basket. Among the products exported from India to China, iron ores, slag and ash constituted of 49percent though the export declines by 10percent year of year. The share of cotton, yarn, fabrics in total exports from India to china stood at 10percent for the period Jan-Oct, 2011. Spectacular rise was seen in the exports of Copper and articles thereof (HS74), Plastic (HS 39), food waste (HS 23) and miscellaneous chemical products (HS 38) recording increase of 164 percent, 71 percent, 64 percent and 63 percent year of year respectively. In Jan-Oct, 2011, imports from China touched a total of USD 41.68 billion, increasing by more than 27 percent over the figure for Jan-Oct, 2010. In Jan-Oct, 2011, India was the 7th largest export destination for china.

With the growth in bilateral trade between two nations, most of Indian companies have a presence in Sanghai which is China's financial centre. The prominent companies include Dr. Reddy laboratories, Aurobindo Pharma, Matrix Pharma, NIIT, Bharat forge, Infosys, TCS, APTECH, WIPRO, M. Satyam, Reliance industries, TATA Sons, Binani cements and Mahindra and Mahindra. Likewise, Chinese companies have also established their operations in India. Many Chinese companies have opened project offices in India that include Sino steel, Shougang International, Baoshan Iron and Steel ltd., Sany Heavy Industry Ltd., China Dang fang International, Sino hydro corporation etc. Many IT and hardware manufacturing companies such as ZTE, TCL, Haier, Huawei Technologies are also have operations in India. With regard to the study on development and innovation in the IT industry's of both the countries, Hung, Shiu-Wan (2009) found that the IT industries in both India and China have unique characteristics, but they also share numerous complementary features. A large number of Chinese companies are also involved in EPC Projects in the power sector which includes Shenghai Electric, Shenyang Electric, Dongfang electric. Chinese automobile major Beijing Automotive Industry corporation (BAIC) has recently announced plans to invest US\$ 250 millions in an auto plant in Pune. TBEA, a Xinjiang- based transformer manufacturer has firmed up plans to invest in a manufacturing facility in Gujarat^{xix}.

Ways Ahead

In the context of China's rise and India's emergence, we have to take into the dynamics of India China relations. In a global age, the international situation responds to changes in geopolitics and geo-economics. Geo-politics and geo-economics call for adjustments and bring about power shifts in the relation among nations. Both are required to create an ease atmosphere of confidence in which they can collaborate together and strengthen their relations. There should be meaningful and significant dialogue between two nations to address vital issues in the region which can be addressed jointly. Both sides should build up their trade and open up our markets. There is dire necessity to generate favorable public opinion to ease the relations across the borders. Reports of blockage of shared waters and the stapled visa are the irritants that necessitate instant attention. The two Asian giants require a matured and an effective comprehensive approach to strengthen India-China their relations by avoiding conflicting elements.

Each nation must be aware of territorial considerations of the other. The trade imbalance exists between two nations which should not come on the way. There is lot of potential for investors to invest in China and vice-versa and people to people relations play a vital role in better trade relations. The governments of India should invest significantly in the infrastructure in the north east to build confidence and to dispel the feeling alienation in the region. Thanks to the concerted efforts of sides, two-way trade and economic co-operation has achieved extra ordinary progress. At present, China is India's largest trading partner while India China's top trading partner in south Asia. To reinforce the base of trade and economic relations what is needed for both nations to be partners instead of rivals. Both countries have to strengthen communication through dialogue and consultation. Both countries have also taken positive steps for welcoming companies from each other to promote new growth opportunities. More information about the benefits of bilateral co-operation should be circulated to wipe out miscommunication, dispel suspicion and enhance mutual trust. When both nations look for a more competent, healthier and sustainable way to develop their economy, they face similar challenges and one of them is to find a growth model that is inclusive and able to deal with growing income inequality which could create social unrest going forward.

India is also making regular energetic consultation with China in multilateral forums like World Trade Organization (WTO), G-20 and Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) on matters like food security, energy security and reconstructing of world economic design as a part of its structured dialogues. The international situation makes its more important that India and China consult and learn to work together, managing their differences. Under current circumstances, India China relations have acquired strategic significance in a world of uncertainty. The way forward for them is to have a constructive and positive way to deal with variety of situations

End Notes

i http/www.indianembasy.org.in/Dynamic content.apex?menu=2andsubmenu=0

ⁱⁱ For more discussion see in this context Roy, Bhaskar (2012) and http://www.southasian analysis.org/percent 5cpapers 49 percent 5cpaper 4856.html.

iii http://www.the chinatimes.com/online/2012/01/1995.html

iv See in this context Kumar, Rayindra (2007)

^v http://www.hinduwisdom.info/India_and_China.htm

vi http://www.varnam.org/blog/2005/02/china and India ancient cultur

vii http://in.china-embassv.org/eng/wh/t61253.htmlTH.chanakvapuri.New Delhi, 110021 India

viii http://www.ihome India and China.

ix See in this context Kamath, M.V. (2003)

x See Nehru, Jawaharlal (1946): p. 197-198

xi See Sarkar, Benoy Ku (1937): Creative India. P-78-79

xii See Nehru, Jawaharlal (1946): P-193- 194

xiii http://hinduwisdom.info/India and China.html

xivhttp://www.indianembassy.org.in/sub_Dynamic content.aspx?menu=37 and sub Menu=05/02/china and Home)

xvihttp://www.indiaembassy.org.in/dynamic content.aspx? menu=5 and submenu= ont_cultur/Home

http://www.ipcs.org/issue-brief/china/sino-indian-strategic-economic-dialogue-an-analysis-184.html

xviii For more discussion see Ahluwalia, M.S. (2011)

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xv Same as above