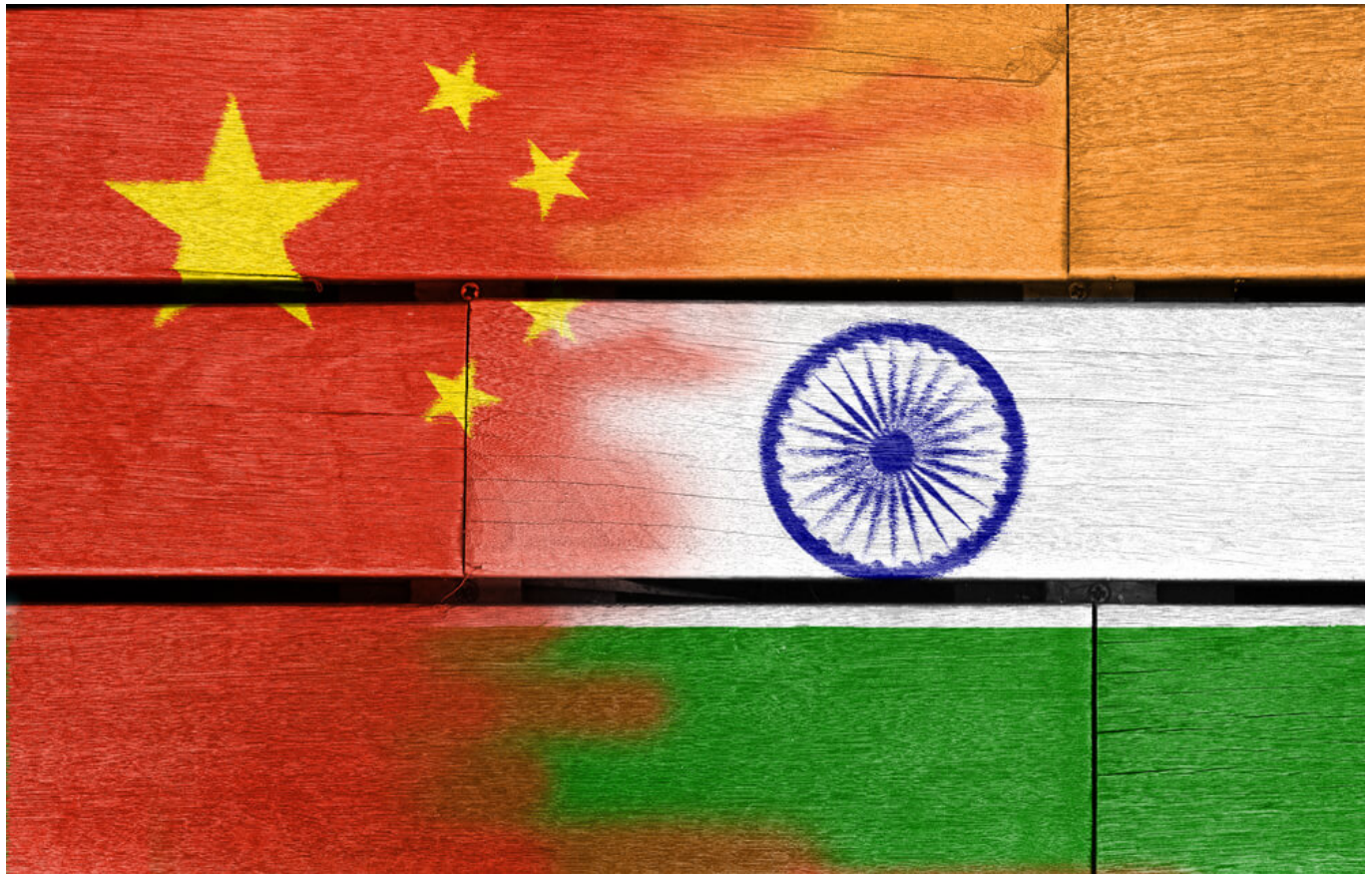




By: Tomorrow's Affairs Staff

Thaw between India and China as the price for US trade pressure



While Washington will negotiate with its European allies, after the summit with Vladimir Putin in Alaska on the not-so-easy adjustment of positions on Ukraine, Donald Trump sees developments in Asia that are thwarting his concept of global relations.

The thaw in relations between India and China is in full swing, albeit step by step, and in the coming weeks it will become evident that Trump's **tightening** of trade relations with New Delhi is one of the more important factors contributing to the rapprochement between the two Asian powers.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is in New Delhi on Monday and Tuesday for a regular **meeting** to manage relations on the interstate border. It is his first visit to Delhi after three years.

While he will discuss with his counterpart, Indian National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, one of the most complex issues facing the two countries, Wang Yi's visit will certainly serve as a preparation for the talks that the leaders of the two countries, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Xi Jinping, will hold in China during the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in late August.

After the two militaries clashed on the Himalayan border in 2020, high-level meetings between India and China have been on hold for almost five years.

However, since October last year, when they reached an agreement on the patrolling regime on the disputed border, they have become more frequent.

India wants a thaw

A series of talks between senior Chinese and Indian officials has now led to concessions not only regarding the border dispute but also in many other areas, particularly the economy. Starting next month, for example, regular air traffic between the two countries will **resume**.

PM Modi's government is enthusiastic about

normalising relations with China, not least because of the troubled relations with the USA that it is currently experiencing.

India is keen to maintain a counterbalance regarding global powers after Washington decided to take the route of trade confrontation with New Delhi by imposing tariffs of up to 50 per cent on imports of goods from India.

The Trump administration has not indicated that it might ease its pressure on India

The Trump administration, while unpredictable, has not indicated that it might ease its pressure on India by asking the country to stop importing oil from Russia.

"If India wants to be treated as a strategic partner of the US, it needs to start acting like one," Trump's adviser Peter Navarro wrote in the Financial Times on Monday.

Describing India's "oil diplomacy" as "opportunistic", Navarro left no room for expectations that Washington could ease trade pressure on India.

Acceleration of the process

The rapprochement between India and China may be growing, but as time goes on, America has less and less reason to expect that it can keep India in its orbit.

Of course, Trump's turn towards confrontation with India has not directly led to a thaw between China and India.

For some time, the two countries have made it clear that they intend to normalise relations. This includes refraining from fuelling anti-Chinese sentiments in India that arose due to China's support for Pakistan during its recent armed conflict with India.

But the American threats of high tariffs have

definitely accelerated this process, which Beijing is particularly looking forward to.

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China cannot expect much economic benefit from a possible de-escalation of the war in Ukraine, and especially from a possible easing of Russia's economic isolation.

But Washington's preoccupation with this process, and in particular the threat of trade measures against India, opens up a lot of room for Beijing to solve problems with its main Asian rival from a much better position.

China provided India and other developing countries a crucial counterbalance to "Trumpian disorder" as a source of capital and technology and as a partner in fighting climate change, Vijay Gokhale, a former Indian ambassador to Beijing, **wrote** for the New York Times.

The fate of the Quad

Both China and India are aware that their strained relations are hurting both countries economically, which, combined with trade pressure from Washington, makes them even more willing to compromise with each other.

High-level India-China meetings will be intense in the coming months, starting with the meeting between PM Modi and Xi Jinping in China later this month (it will be the first visit by an Indian PM to China in 7 years).



The Quad is one of the most important platforms for engaging India in the Western security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region

There should be no doubt that such intense diplomacy between the two Asian giants will quickly bear concrete economic and political fruit.

This raises the question of the shape of the Quad, the four-member security initiative in the Indo-Pacific, when the summit, scheduled in India, takes place later this year.

The Quad is one of the most important platforms for engaging India in the Western security partnership in the Indo-Pacific region.

The foreign ministers of the four countries - the US, Australia, Japan and India - set out a rather ambitious **plan** for future security and economic cooperation in Washington in July.

They launched the Critical Minerals Initiative, a strategic form of cooperation in the diversification of the critical minerals supply chains.

As the thaw between India and China accelerates, Western initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region could lose momentum and undo the progress made in recent years.

US tariffs on India play a major role in this calculation. If Washington's trade pressure on New Delhi is not eased in the very short term, India's partnership in the common front against China will increasingly become unreliable.