

REVIEW

of Albina M. Muratbekova's PhD Dissertation

**"China's Contemporary Social and Economic Interaction with India in Border Areas:
Models and Challenges"**

submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) 6D020900-ORIENTAL STUDIES

The thesis goal is to study the issues of interaction of China with India in socio-economic sphere in the disputed border areas during the 2000-2018 and define the models and challenges of this interaction.

Thesis Relevance

The posing of questions relating to the wide gamut of relations between two neighbours, rising powers and regional leaders are, undoubtedly, of high importance and significance. This is due to various factors, including the relevance of the issues between India and China for Kazakhstan and Central Asia in general.

Central Asia as a region of deep historical and current interactions with both India and China occupies important place in the policy of both India and China, what is reflected in the respective agreements and policies – "BRI" and "Link Central Asia". For the purpose of understanding the regional, interregional and global trends, any developments taking place between India and China, automatically gets high consideration, including by Central Asian states.

The issues of the border disputes which came to the scene of international politics in the second half of XX century, acquire special meaning today. Changing status of both countries – from regional to global powers with all geopolitical, economic, social consequences for the world, paves the way towards highlighting the border disputes as crucial part in overall relations between two countries, including in the field of socio-economic interactions. Therefore, the study is of high relevance.

Thesis Structure and Coherence

The dissertation structure is well organized around the central theme and is comprised of five chapters each answering the set tasks, i.e. the first two chapters are of methodological approaches, both general (Chapter 1) and applied towards the China-India border relations (Chapter 2).

While next three chapters are evolved around the application of the chosen approach. Particularly, Chapter 3 deals with the China and India's participation in the contemporary globalization 2.0 processes, an excursion into the key geopolitical issues between countries, i.e. the Tibet issue, and relations with Pakistan and USSR/Russia; as well as gives a brief overview of the global and regional institutional cooperation between China and India at the multilateral platforms such as BRICS, BRI, SCO, BCIM. Finally, there have been discussed the factor of leadership in the global politics using the case of current leaders – Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi.

Chapters 4 and 5 deal with the bilateral issues on the ground in the border areas showing evolution and current status of development in economic field on the one hand, and highlighting the challenges for the reciprocal relations in the border areas on the other.

The introduction, conclusion, list of references are also structured.

Thesis Key Findings

To answer the set goal, there in the thesis were posed key tasks relating to both theoretical and practical assessment of the theme.

From methodological plane, there have been undertaken the task to survey the theoretical and conceptual framework of the China-India relations under the so called globalization 2.0 process; particularly, the concept of the border and value of this disputed territories, and level of economic interdependence between China and India as seen through their economic interaction.

Based on this, the PhD candidate further tried to find answers, on empirical plane, to the following issues: a correlation between the multilateral and bilateral institutional efforts of China and India and the improvements in the socio-economic interaction in the disputed border regions; a brief historical sketch on the roots of the boundary issue and evolution of the dispute; assessment of institutional and individual efforts and aspirations of leaders towards the global governance and their role in the process of globalisation; types of interaction in the boundary areas and impact of militarization on this; evaluation of internal and external factors that influenced the formation and development of the positions towards the territorial dispute and the overall bilateral relations.

Needless to say, that the wide set of questions require comprehensive substantial analysis what could be done based on the well elaborated methodological approach, deep knowledge of both historical and modern sources, documents, materials. The sensitivity of the issue of borders itself poses the challenge of correct calibrating all materials and approaches in possess, so to produce well-balanced and objective results. In other words, there should be done preliminary significant work on identifying, analyzing combination of various factors on the theme.

The PhD candidate applied efforts and succeeded in making review of the existing literature, highlighting the Asian International Relations domain and identifying several groups of available research literature, so to present the theme from multidimensional perspectives.

Though one could not fully agree to some ideas, definitions and approaches used, however, there should be mentioned significant work made by PhD student Albina Muratbekova in collecting the numerous spread sources and literature, making historiographic survey, conducting interviews with some scholars in India, applying the results of the interview and literature review in her dissertation, etc.

Participation in the international research fellowships and internships in India and China, and programmes, such as PhD Support Programme "The EU, Central Asia and the Caucasus in the International System" (EUCACIS) by the Institut für Europäische Politik (IEP) and the Centre international de formation européenne (CIFE) throughout 2017-2019 contributed as well towards the general research performance of the PhD candidate.

In a view of all mentioned above, the dissertation work by Albina Muratbekova generally meets the requirements for the dissertations and she deserves the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy for the thesis "China's Contemporary Social and Economic Interaction with India in Border Areas: Models and Challenges".

Research supervisor:

Assoc. Prof., Dr. Laura G. Yerekeshcheva,

Deputy Director, Institute of Oriental Studies at the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Kazakhstan

