Ontological Security and India-China Relations:
From Border War to "News War"

This paper joins the growing scholarship on the ontological security needs of states in international relations (IR) literature and explores its relevance to India-China relations. Ontological security is the security of identity, achieved by routinized relationships with significant others and actors can become attached to those relationships. The main research question will be twofold: to what extent is the border dispute constitutive of India and China's identities in their interactions; and, to what extent can the concept ontological security shed light on understanding India-China relations and on ending persistent border conflict? By reviewing India-China border dispute and examining recent phenomenon, the "news war," the paper argues that there is a victim-perpetrator/loser-winner relationship between India and China, caused by the 1962 war and routinized in the years thereafter, which indicates great conflict potential. However, breaking out of this relationship will render their identities insecure. The "news war" demonstrates ontological security-seeking behaviors of India and China. To end persistent conflict, it is important to take more seriously the legacy of the past traumatic interactions. Moreover, a multi-layered historical reconciliation process could serve as a tactic to conflict resolution and to foster mutual trust between India and China.

Lu Yang[1]

Introduction

After two decades of diplomatic silence following the 1962 border war, India and China started border negotiations in the 1980s, and in the 1990s established confidence-building measures in the border area. Since then, peace in the border area has largely been maintained. With the improvement of bilateral relations, the India-China border dispute has moved to a post-conflict stage, which means that if current trends in bilateral relations continue, force is unlikely to be used to settle the ongoing dispute. However, border conflict has not disappeared, but has, in the recent years, transformed into a 'news war' from August to September in 2009 between the two states, where 'border' is the most common word used in the media reports.[2] By focusing on the recent development of India-China border dispute reported on Indian and Chinese media, the article applies the concept ontological security to explain the persistent conflicts around the border, and explores the relevance of ontological security to the resolution of border dispute as well to India-China relations.

Ontological security, as opposed to security as survival, is security of the self. There is a growing body of literature in international relations (IR) theory on ontological security, which argues that in addition to physical security, states also seek ontological security.[3] This paper joins the growing scholarship on the ontological security needs of states. The main research

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[2] The term 'news war' was taken from the media's description of the phenomenon. Some commentaries see for example, "The China vs. India News War," by Reshma Patil, *The Diplomat*, 29 September 2013, available at http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/29/the-china-vs-india-news-war/ (accessed 10 January 2015); 'India Media Declares War on China', by Bharat Bhushan, *India Today*, 16 September 2009, available at http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/Indian+media+declares+war+on+China/1/61929.html (accessed January 10, 2015)

[3] See for example, Huysmans (1998), McSweeney (1999), Kinnvall (2004), Steele (2005), Mitzen (2006); Krolikowski (2008), Chacko (2014).

question will be twofold: to what extent is the border dispute constitutive of India and China's identities in their interactions; and, to what extent can the concept ontological security shed light on understanding India-China relations and on the resolution of the protracted border dispute? The paper argues that in order to break the vicious circle of security dilemma between India and China, the first step is to acknowledge in theory and practice the existence of ontological security need of states and to take more seriously the legacy of the past interactions, since negative experiences in the past is constitutive of a state's identity, and identity, once formed, may resist easy change.

This article proceeds in four parts. The first section reviews the literature on ontological security in IR with a preference on Jennifer Mitzen (2006)'s approach. The second section provides an overview of the development of border dispute and briefly major agreements on border issue. The third section examines a recent phenomenon emerged in bilateral relations, the "news war," addresses the research question at the first level, on identity and border dispute, and brings the concept ontological security into the analysis. The final section discusses the implications of ontological security for ending persistent border conflicts and suggests the importance of historical reconciliation between India and China and the strategies leading to this.

Ontological Security in International Relations

Ontological security approaches challenge the assumption in mainstream approaches that states only engage in physical security-seeking, that is survival, and instead, argue that states also engage in ontological security-seeking, that is, security of the self. The term ontological security has its roots in psychology and sociology.[4] Within the discipline of sociology,

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[4] It was first coined by the renowned psychiatrist R.D. Laing (Laing 1969). In sociology, the term is closely associated with Anthony Giddens (1984)'s structuration theory which is based in the analysis of both structure and agents.

Anthony Giddens' structuration theory provides a useful framework for understanding the motivations, desires and incentives of agents.[5] Building on the psychological foundations of an individual, Giddens' notion of ontological security drew attention to the relational aspect that '*the self as reflexively understood by an individual in terms of his or her own biography*', which is routinely created and sustained (Giddens 1991: 53). The term was introduced to IR by Jef Huysmans and further developed by other scholars. Huysmans (1998) draws attention to the meaning of security. He argues that much of IR has neglected the question of ontological security, that security can also be '*defined in terms of an inner condition of being at peace with oneself*' (Huysmans 1998: 230). Due to the fear of the unknown, human beings tend to institutionalize social relations and establish orders, thereby providing cognitive security for themselves. The change of orders will create a condition of ontological insecurity, and this insecurity will be reflected into states' security policies. As he formulates, '*Ontological security is a strategy of managing the limits of reflexivity ... by fixing social relations into a symbolic and institutional order. It ... concerns the general question of the political – how to order social relations while simultaneously guaranteeing the very activity of ordering itself*' (Huysmans 1998: 242). Taking Giddens' notion of ontological security at individual level as a starting point, Jennifer Mitzen (2006) extrapolates the notion to state level. She argues that state identity is very much constituted and sustained by social relationships and threats, and routinized relationships could cause ontological insecurity. Other scholars such as Kinnvall and Steele focus the construction of a biographical narrative that state agents seek to fulfill their self-identity requirements, which helps states mitigate anxiety over uncertainty in the international system (Kinnvall 2006, Steele 2005, Krolikowski 2008, Chako 2013).

The theoretical framework used in this article gains insights mainly from Mitzen's approach: Individuals need to feel secure in who they are, as identities or selves, because they require a stable cognitive environment for agency. Ontological security is thus security of the self, which is important for actors to relate ends to means systematically. Uncertainty in

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[5] Giddens (1984, 1991), see also Wendt (1987).

cognitive environment renders actors' identities insecure. Since individual identity is formed and sustained through relationships, actors achieve ontological security especially by routinizing their relations with significant others. These routines provide cognitive certainty which sustains continued agency, actors therefore get attached to these social relationships. Applying ontological security to states, states might actually come to prefer their ongoing, certain conflict because even a harmful or self-defeating relationship can provide ontological security (Mitzen 2006: 342). Mitzen's proposition that states seek ontological security reveals that conflicts can be caused not only by uncertainty but also by the certainty such relationships offer their participants.[6] As she pointed out, '*Where conflict persists and comes to fulfill identity needs, breaking free can generate ontological insecurity, which states seek to avoid*' (Mitzen 2006: 343).

Review of India-China Border Dispute

The India-China border dispute is a colonial legacy. Through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, British power in India expanded and met China at the Himalaya. The British tried to settle boundaries with China, yet only achieved partially. When they left India in 1947, some areas still remained undefined and this later became a problem between India and China.

The Sino-Indian border is generally divided into the eastern, middle and western sector (See Map 1). On the western sector is the Aksai Chin plateau held by China, which, on its three sides, faces Ladakh (in Indian-administered Kashmir), Tibet, and Xinjiang. Northwest of the western sector is an area of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir ceded by Pakistan to China in 1963, which India refuses to recognise. On the eastern sector the dispute is over the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh, an area south of the McMahon Line.[7] The middle sector involves a dispute

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[6] In IR literature, realists emphasize security dilemma as a source of conflicts, which means, in anarchy, actions taken for one's own security can threaten the security of others, leading to arms races and conflicts, and argue that uncertainty is the fundamental cause of security dilemma.

[7] Proposed by Indian Foreign Secretary Henry McMahon secretly in the Simla Conference between British, Tibet

over various points on the border between Indian states Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and China's Tibet. The border dispute focuses mainly on the western sector and eastern sector.

Map: The Sino-Indian Disputed Border Area (Source: The Economist, Feb 8th, 2012)

[Note: The Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS), an autonomous research institute at the National University of Singapore, cannot confirm the authenticity of this map.]

In the first half 1950s, India and China had a friendly relationship, due partly to the sense of commonality as new Asian states liberated from the colonial rules, but also due to their respective strategic interests. However, their differences over their common border soon emerged after they signed the *Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between Tibet Region of China and India* in 1954 and seriously damaged this friendly relationship. In the early 1960s, under Nehru's 'Forward Policy', India set up as many posts as possible in the disputed areas in the eastern and western sector and led to military confrontation with China on the border. After reviewing the situation on the border, Chinese leaders decided to fight a limited war against India, which was termed in Chinese '*zi wei fan ji zhan*' (war of self-defence counterattack). On

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and China from 1913 to 1914, is a source of great controversy in the India-China border dispute.

October 20, 1962, massive attacks from Chinese troops began along the entire border. India did not expect China's attack and the better prepared Chinese troops soon overwhelmed Indian troops in both the eastern and western sectors. After a remarkable advance, Chinese troops declared a unilateral cease-fire on November 21, 1962. The war ended with India's defeat, yet it did not change the status of actual control which had been established before the war, that is, China's control over the western sector and India over the eastern sector. The war also has far more consequences in India than in China. The war was perceived as a Chinese invasion of Indian territory. For India, the defeat of 1962 was traumatic.[8] The Indians reacted with an upsurge in patriotism. The defeat was attributed to India's incapability in its military, and China was viewed as a betrayer of Nehru's friendly policies towards China. In the belief that the inadequate defence preparation of India had led to the losses of 1962, Indian began to mobilize its economic resources in order to strengthen its military capacities. In the perception of Chinese leaders, they secured a border which was strategically significant for China and preserved territory integrity. Yet, the border conflict with India also aggravated worsening Sino-Soviet relations and pushed China into a state of further isolation. After the war, the dispute entered into a stalemate. All the channels of communication between India and China were broken or suspended. In 1976, India and China finally reached a consensus to restore ambassadorial-level relations. The exchange of ambassadors suggested that relations had emerged out of the deep freeze and entered a period of *Détente*.

It was not until 1981, however, that India and China began to negotiate their border. The first period of border negotiation was taken the form of eight rounds of border talks at the vice-ministerial level from 1981-1987. From 1986-1987, a face-off between Indian and Chinese troops occurred at Sumdorung Chu valley, which brought India and China again to the brink of war.[9] The face-off was at the end de-escalated by mutual diplomatic efforts. In 1988 Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited China, which marked the normalization of India-China

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[8] Indian ambassador to Peking, B.K. Nehru asserted, quoted in *Quarterly Economic Report of the Indian Institute of Public Opinion*, Vol. IX (December 1962), p. 3, quoted after Hansen (1967: 236).
[9] On Sumdorung Chu crisis see Sawhney (2002: 29), Zhao (2000: 291).

relations. Following his visit, Joint Working Groups (JWG) on border were established, replaced the border talks to continue the negotiation. Although border talks during the 1980s failed to achieve any breakthrough, the dialogue itself eased tensions and provided a platform for exchanging views as to border and discussing cooperation in other areas.

Under the new mechanism of JWG, the border negotiation during the 1990s was fruitful. In 1993, the *Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace along the Line of Actual Control* (LAC) was signed, followed by *Agreement on Confidence-Building Measures along the LAC* in 1996. These two Agreements marked a big step forward in exploring border solution and dealing with possible military crises. Throughout the 1990s, India-China relations continued to develop, although there was a temporary setback in 1998 on the ground that India pleaded threat from China to justify its nuclear tests. The relations recovered soon in the early 2000s and bilateral trade had by then emerged as a driving force.

In 2003 India and China established Special Representatives' Meetings to address border issue. The Special Representatives' Meetings discuss the question at a political level. One of the major achievements of the Meetings is the *Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the Border Question* signed in 2005. According to this Agreement, both sides agreed to arrive at 'package settlement'.[10] This represented a major change in the Indian approach to the resolution of the problem as compared to the previous sector-by-sector approach. In recent years, India and China achieved two other agreements, *Agreement on the Establishment of a Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on Border Affairs* (2012) and *Agreement on Border Defence Cooperation* (2013), which could further strengthen India and China's capability of mitigating conflicts and maintaining stability along the border.

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[10] See the Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question between India and China, 11 April 2005. Package settlement was first raised by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1960, later by Deng Xiaoping, suggesting a swap between eastern and western sector. China recognizes the McMahon Line in the east, while India recognizes the China's status quo in the western sector.

Since the conclusion of the two confidence building agreements in the 1990s, peace along the LAC in the border areas has been largely maintained. However, given that there is no physically demarcated LAC on the ground or on military map, sporadic incidents of border transgressions occurred at times, in some cases, even caused face-offs between the troops from both sides.[11] As the Indian Defence Minister A.K. Antony described the situation along the LAC, '*There are few areas along the border where India and China have different perceptions of LAC including territory in Arunachal Pradesh. Both sides patrol up to their respective perceptions of LAC due to perceived differences in its alignment*'. [12] These border transgressions were reported by media and have become a major source of agitations in the bilateral relations. As to the development of the India-China border dispute, the following circle (Figure 1) can provide some insights into the conflict dynamics. The circle describes different stages of a conflict. India-China border dispute has gone through all these stages, and currently is at the stage of negotiation. Nevertheless, the source of the conflict, the conflicting border claims, has not been resolved, which means, conflict could be triggered again and escalate under certain circumstances, though they may not take a physical form. To make this point concretely, I refer to a recent phenomenon emerged in Indian and Chinese media reports on each other, which can be described as 'news war'. The following section examines this 'news war' and shows that due to the establishment of various mechanisms on border and the intention from both sides that not to have a second war, India-China border dispute has entered into a stage where military conflict is less likely, yet the unresolved conflict persists and has transformed its form from tangible to intangible.

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[11] Recent face-offs along the LAC such as the one in April, 2013 at Daulat Beg Oldi, the one at Chumar in September, 2014, and the one at Burtse in September, 2015.

[12] "Closely monitoring activities in China, Pakistan: government," *The Indian Express*, 9 May 2012, available at http://www.indianexpress.com/news/closely-monitoring-activities-in-china-pakistan-government/947271/1 (accessed 10 January 2015).
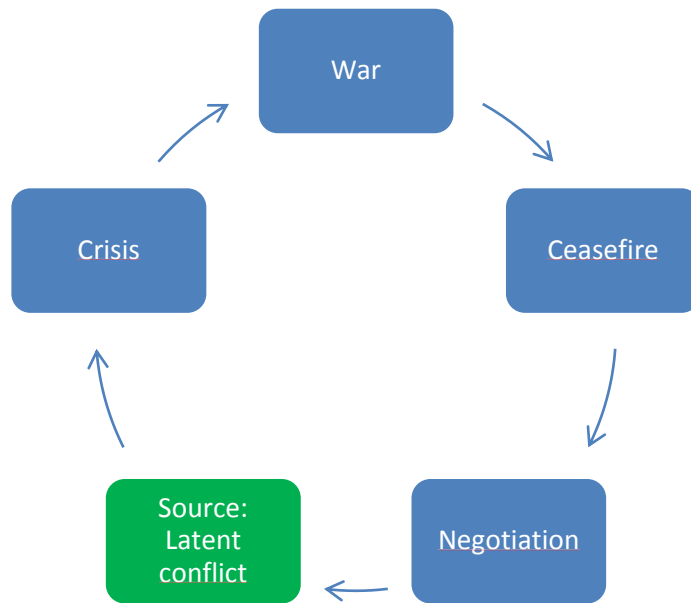
Figure 1 Conflict Circle

The 'News War' in 2009

Since 2003, India-China relations have entered a stage of overall development. Intensified relations have made their reports about each other attractive in their respective media, yet India and China's images presented in these reports are often biased. According to Tang Lu's observation,[13] in Chinese media, the frame of India's image-building basically revolves around nuclear issues, religious and caste conflicts, India's big power dream and its desire to catch up China, Sino-Indian border issue, the US-India partnership, India-Pakistan conflict, natural disasters and various social news. She noticed that in China the market-oriented urban media and online media have increasing impact and the Indian image on these sections of Chinese media varies from moderate to negative. There are two aspects to explain this: On the one hand, it should be recognized that due to marketing considerations some of these media specifically seek to promote national pride by showing that China is superior to India, by focusing on issues

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[13] Tang Lu is a senior journalist of the Xinhua News Agency who reports India. She wrote an article on Chinese media reports on India, see Tang (2004) and one on India's media reports on China, see Tang (2010).

which could foster nationalist sentiments and meet the readers/viewers' tastes (Tang 2004: 70-71).

In Indian media, from 2003 to 2006, the keynote of media reports was still positive, though not without fears and doubts. However, since the end of 2006 there had been increasingly negative reports on China (Tang 2010). This turn of India's media could be triggered by Chinese ambassador Sun Yuxi's public claim in November 2006 that in China's position, Arunachal Pradesh is Chinese territory.[14] The understanding of a package settlement reached in 2005 by the *Agreement on Political Parameters and Guiding Principle* was generally read in Indian strategic community, who are influential in leading India's public opinion, as China's acceptance of Arunachal Pradesh. However, Sun's claim changed this impression and to some extent awaked the memory of 'Chinese betrayal', a public perception formed in the aftermath of the 1962 border war, which in turn, confirmed the doubts on China within Indian strategic community. From the end of the 2006 onwards, discussions on Arunachal Pradesh and reports on Chinese 'border incursions' began to increase and reached a peak in the summer of 2009. In summer 2009, from August to September, India's media collectively declared a 'war' with China. For near a month-long period of time, almost on every weekend, there was an exclusive news release of China's incursions in the border area,[15] especially on the 24-hour TV news channels. Many TV debates were held, along with moderators' provocative comments and repeated visual images on troops and border creating a war-like atmosphere. The incursions were downplayed by the Indian and Chinese governments,[16] yet misinformed stories seriously

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[14] 'Arunachal Pradesh is our territory: Chinese envoy', *Rediff* News, 14 November 2006, available at http://www.rediff.com/news/2006/nov/14china.htm (accessed 10 January 2015).
[15] For example, 'Chinese helicopters enter Indian air space twice', available at http://www.hindustantimes.com/News-Feed/India/China-violates-Indian-air-space-made-many-incursions-in-Leh/Article1-448535.aspx#sthash.wrmGyi7s.dpuf (accessed 10 January 2015); 'Border violation by China', available at http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/border-violation-by-china/article16143.ece?ref=relatedNews (accessed January 10, 2015).; 'After Ladakh, Chinese incursions now reported in Uttarakhand', available at http://news.rediff.com/report/2009/sep/13/chinese-incursions-now-reported-in-uttarakhand1.htm (accessed 10 January 2015).
[16] See 'India of 2009 is not India of 1962: NSA Narayanan', available at http://news.rediff.com/report/2009/sep/19/india-of-2009-is-not-india-of-1962.htm (accessed January 10, 2015); 'Media asked not to 'overplay' China border incidents', available at http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/media-asked-not-to-overplay-china-border-incidents/article22617.ece (accessed January 10, 2015); 'China denies helicopter incursion reports', available at

affected bilateral relations. Moreover, this media hype on Chinese "border incursions" naturally attracted the attention of Chinese journalists. Titles published by the *International Harald Leader* in China during August and September 2009,[17] such as, 'India Deliberately Creates "Water War"(印度处心积虑制造"水战")', 'India's Space Dream Thrives by Failures (印度太空梦愈挫愈勇)', 'Where Does Indian Media's Addiction of Hyping China Come from (印度媒体炒作中国瘾从何来)', 'Who Makes Troubles on the Sino-Indian Border (谁在给中印边界添乱)', show that Chinese media launched a tit-for-tat strategy as reaction to India's media hype on the border.

As mentioned before, Indians' attitude towards China had been largely informed by the brief border war in 1962. India's own role in the border crisis and the problematic of the border legacy were filtered out of India's popular discourse except in occasional, contrarian media commentaries. The dominant memory and narrative of the 1962 war has been thus one of a sudden and unprovoked Chinese attack on India's territorial integrity. India was a 'victim' in this memory. In addition to this, market-oriented news business also played a role in fostering the 'news war'. Topics on such border issues can easily attract viewers' attention, which provides the condition of media hype. The historically determined antipathy to China, together with the anxiety about the challenges that a rising China could bring about, and the market-oriented news business, contributed to the media narratives that China is a threat.[18]

The following figure describes the linguistic routines between Chinese and Indian media (see Figure 2) in the 'news war'. As shown in the circle, the negative routine had already been established and there is no evidence showing that this 'news war' will soon come to an end,

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http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-denies-helicopter-incursion-reports/article13483.ece; 'India, China play down border incursion reports', available at http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-china-play-down-border-incursion-reports/article17127.ece?ref=relatedNews (accessed 10 January 2015); 'Border with China most peaceful: Krishna', http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/border-with-china-most-peaceful-krishna/article16619.ece?ref=relatedNews (accessed 10January 2015).

[17] *International Harlad Leader* is an international news weekly charged by the Xinhua News Agency, which according to Tang Lu (Tang 2004), and provides in-depth reports on India in China.

[18] See 'Indians See Threat From Pakistan, Extremist', Pew Research Center, October 20, 2010, and India Poll 2013, Lowy Institute. According to these two surveys, China is India's security threat only after Pakistan.

though it may take less extreme way when compared with the summer of 2009. Currently, it is in both governments' interests to keep good relations with each other. Media on both sides have received some pressure from the governments, yet to a larger extent on the Chinese side, since Chinese media has been under government's control, whereas Indian government can only communicate with the media. In spite of this, there is no doubt that negative media reports on both sides have had an immense impact on public opinion and in turn sustain their respective identities in their relationship. What I want to point out is the *'victim'* identity of India and the *'winner'* identity of China. Although China did not really gain from the war since it not only failed to get most of the territory it claims but also created an enemy in its direct neighborhood, China has the psychology of a winner.

Generally speaking, the concept identity implies a relationship between self and others. For example, a teacher needs students, otherwise he/she cannot perceive him/herself as a teacher. In the same way, the counterpart of a victim is a perpetrator, thus in India's perception, China is perceived as a perpetrator in order to sustain India's identity as a victim; likewise, China perceives India as a loser in order to sustain its identity as a winner. In other words, in India's perception, its relationship with China is a victim-perpetrator relationship, while in China's perception, a winner-loser relationship with India. Both relationships had their origins in the 1962 border war and were routinized in the years thereafter. According to the understanding of ontological security, routinized relationships provide cognitive certainty therefore actors get attached to these relationships. The victim-perpetrator/loser-winner relationship implies an inferior psychological position of India and a superior one of China. Reflected in the linguistic circle, India tends to portray China as a threat, while China tends to look down India. In sum, the 'news war' demonstrates ontological security-seeking behaviors of India and China. Although this victim-perpetrator/loser-winner relationship indicates great conflict potential, breaking out of this relationship will render their identity insecure. The stability of social relationships suggests that conflict can be caused not by uncertainty, which, as the realist school suggests, but by the certainty such relationships offer to their participants.
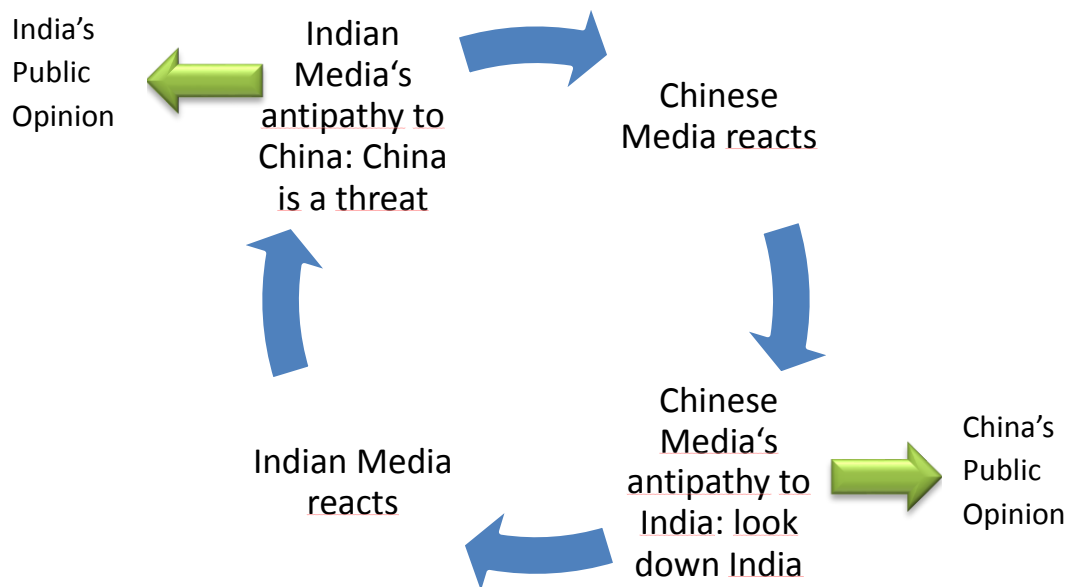
Figure 2 Linguistic circle

Conclusion: Break the Vicious Circle?

The ontological security-seeking behavior of states can help address the problem of persistent conflicts by shedding light on the stability of social relationships. For conflict resolution, according to Mitzen, the variation in attachment style is critical, that '*some actors rigidly repeat routines, while others participate more reflexively*', which '*has implications for the potential to transform dilemmatic conflicts*' (Mitzen 2006: 343). Hence, attempts to end intractable conflict should '*focus on breaking down the rigid attachment to routines and creating routines of interaction that permit parties to reveal aspirations and learn from interactions*' and need '*public sphere oriented strategies*'(Mitzen 2006: 363).

The 'news war' had attracted the attention of journalists, academics and politicians from both sides. Efforts for increasing understandings between Indian and Chinese media began from the track-two level and have moved to track-one level. In an effort to help bridge the media divide, the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore

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convened a China-India Media Mediation Workshop in May 2012, brought together practitioners and experts from China and India to address the issue.[19] The idea caught on, and the governments joined in. Following the Workshop in Singapore, China's Global Times Foundation and India's Observer Research Foundation launched the first China-India media exchange program in Beijing in August 2013. Later, on 16th September, the first meeting of India-China Media Forum was held in New Delhi. Salman Khurshid, Indian External Affairs Minister and Cai Mingzhao, Minister of the State Council Information Office of China inaugurated the forum.[20]

The media exchanges between India and China in the past two years shows signs of attempts for a change, nevertheless, it remains a hard work to break down the old routines. Traumatic encounters between states such as wars or other disruptive events, especially those related to the founding stage of these states, results in a strong attachment of states to harmful routines. As shown by the case of the 'news war', the harmful routines, established by the experience of 1962, continue to construct India-China relations and undermine their mutual trust. There is no doubt that interactions between India and China have intensified to a large extent over the past decade and this trend will continue, but it will not automatically lead to a better trust between them.

Taking the example of China-Japan relations, the ties of trade, tourism, and cultural exchanges between China and Japan have been deepening, however, these material interactions have not yet contributed to historical reconciliation and the resolution of their territorial dispute. Therefore, for India and China relations, efforts towards historical reconciliation should be taken in parallel with intensified interactions between two nations. Fresh insights can be gained from the European context: the postwar German reconciliation process has been supported by a wide range of societal actors such as NGOs, journalists and historians as well as political

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[19] The content of this workshop see http://southasiandiaspora.org/index.php/archives/6298 (accessed 10 January 2015).
[20] See the website of Indian Ministry of External Affairs http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-topic.htm?104/IndiaChina+Media+Forum+New+Delhi+September+16+2013 (accessed 10 January 2015).

leaders (Feldman 2014); the reconciliation between France and Germany took place in the context of the economic integration of Western Europe, accompanied by the building of common political institutions. The European stories suggest that historical reconciliation is a multi-layered process which requires initiatives from the civil societies building transnational networks to connect practitioners and academics, as well as initiatives from the political level. To end with, we know that overcoming conflict is not easy, however, the recognition of ontological security-seeking of states does open a new perspective for understanding conflict, and thus potentials to bring new ideas and tactics in for ending persistent conflicts.

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