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Transcript

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## CHINA IN THE WORLD PODCAST

Host: **Paul Haenle**

Guest: **Ma Jiali**

Episode 31: Bright Future for China-India Ties  
October 28, 2014

**Haenle:** You're listening the Carnegie–Tsinghua China in the World Podcast, a series of conversations with Chinese and international experts on China's foreign policy, international role and China's relations with the world brought to you by the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center located in Beijing. I'm Paul Haenle, the director of the Carnegie–Tsinghua Center, and I'll be your host. Today, we're joined by professor Ma Jiali to discuss China-India Relations. Professor Ma is a South Asia expert and deputy director for the Center for Strategic Studies at the China Reform Forum. Professor Ma, thank you very much for joining us today.

**Ma:** Thank you.

**Haenle:** I would like to start, if I could, by asking you to help us put into context President Xi Jinping's recent trip to India last week. Could you help us understand what President Xi Jinping was hoping to accomplish on this visit? What you think Prime Minister Modi from India was trying to accomplish? And, whether the two leaders succeeded in their efforts?

**Ma:** President Xi Jinping was visiting India this month, and, I think, it was a successful visit because his visit was the first for President Xi and the first for Prime Minister Modi. As you know, Modi won the election last May. He is a new leader, and he is an ambitious leader. He has very broad objectives. He wants India to become a strong, prosperous, and rich country. I think this thinking is related to Chinese interests. Chinese interests are that we would like to see good relations between China and India. So, President Xi Jinping has paid his first visit to India this month just after Modi took his position 3 months ago. Why did Xi Jinping pay this visit this month? I think China [sees] India as an important country. India is a close neighbor of China's. India is a developing country. India has an active and positive role to play in the international arena. So, we want to have closer relationship with India. This includes the political field, economic field, cultural field, and some other fields like international cooperation. So, Chinese President Xi Jinping paid this visit. We wanted this visit to be a very successful one. Xi has visited Modi's home state of Gujarat. He visited many sites within Gujarat. President Xi also sent a friendly message to Modi on his birthday. So, I think, this arrangement was very good.

**Haenle:** So, it sounds to me like you're saying Chinese leaders looked positively upon Prime Minister Modi's elections and see him as somebody, potentially, that the Chinese leadership can work with. Can you give me a sense from a strategic standpoint, how does India fit into China's foreign policy initiatives like the Maritime Silk Road, the 21st-century Silk Road, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS Bank, and, of course, CICA. How does India fits into these initiatives that China has pursued?

**Ma:** Just after Modi took his post, the Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang called him and expressed Chinese congratulations and good will to his victory. Just after that, China sent a special envoy with Foreign Minister Wang Yi to visit India. When Xi Jinping visited Brazil, he met with Prime Minister Modi, and they had a good, friendly talk. They reached an agreement that China and India should cooperate on many things, bilaterally and multilaterally. In the international arena, we are seeking closer cooperation in things like SCO, BRICS, and I think it's a good development for China and India.

**Haenle:** To include India in these initiatives from a Chinese standpoint, you see that as something that is positive and sought for.

**Ma:** Yes.

**Haenle:** Now, there does obviously continue to be some tensions on the border area between China and India. The line of actual control is an issue that the two sides continue to discuss. There are skirmishes and transgressions, including during Pres. Xi's visit to India. In your view, does these border issues, this tension, overshadow President Xi's visit?

**Ma:** I think maybe the border disputes have had some negative impact on this visit, but both China and the Indian government realize that the border issues is one of many other issues. We have more issues that call for cooperation, so we can seek greater cooperation in the relationship. Of course, you must recognize that the border issues are not small issues; they are big issues. It's a big and difficult barrier in front of the relationship between China and India. You must resolve it. But now, we should keep peace, and we should have peaceful border. We should pay some time. We should seek a final settlement which all sides can accept, respect, which both sides can accept.

**Haenle:** Let me ask you about the visit itself. The fact that this tension, that Chinese went into the Indian side of the demarcation line on the eve of President Xi's visit to India. Was this an effort by the Chinese leadership to underline its determination on these border issues? Or, is this something that was done by the PLA acting unilaterally or by itself?

**Ma:** I have noticed many media sources and many newspapers talked about that, mentioned that. But, I would like to mention one fact. China and India have never demarcated the boundary-line. So there are disputed areas. So we cannot say that China 'goes into' Indian territory. So this is a problem. So, we should find a line of control. But, until now, we have not demarcated a line of control. I think the first thing now is we should demarcate; we should define the line of demarcation.

**Haenle:** Sure. I take your point. However, it does appear as though the number of Chinese troops near the line of demarcation went up in advance of Xi's visit, and, then, moved closer on the eve of his visit. And you are right, many outside observers are trying to understand whether or not that was done deliberately on the Chinese leadership to show their determination on this issue. Or, was that the PLA acting independently?

**Ma:** No, I think the Chinese PLA is under the leadership of the central committee, no problem. But, I think that the PLA, they have their own thinking, their own idea about the line. So, you cannot say that China, Chinese PLA, goes into the Indian territory. You cannot say that Indian operations goes into the Chinese territory. We have to establish some mechanism to discuss this issue.

**Haenle:** Let me turn, if I could, to the dynamics of the relationship between India, China, and Japan. The India Prime Minister recently visited Japan. And, by all accounts had a successful visit. It was a warm visit. The two sides elevated their relationship to a special strategic and global partnership. Japan pledged 35 billion dollars of investment over 5 years. It seems to be a pretty

successful visit. But the dynamics between the India, Japan, and China, between the Three Asian Giants are complex. I wonder if you could give us a sense of your view as how you see the dynamics given Modi's recent trip to Tokyo and President Xi's recent trip to India.

**Ma:** India is an independent country. It has the right to develop relationships with any country. Bilaterally speaking, no problem, because every country wants to have good relations, close relations with other countries, especially with a big power like Japan, a current Asian giant. Of course, we don't criticize the Indian and Japan relationship. But, the question is that Japan and the Abe government have some trouble. He denied their history. He denied the history after World War II. This is a problem. The Abe government wants to lure India to closer ties to Japan. So, this is a problem. From the economic point, I think there is no big problem. India is a huge country. It's a huge market. It has a big potential market. Japan can invest and trade with it. From China's side, you already have a relationship with India. Bilaterally speaking, this relationship has its own logic. India is our close neighbor. India is a huge market. India is a partner for international cooperation. So, China wants to have closer relationship with India. You want to invest in Indian government. You want to help India to build up its infrastructure. Many people know that India's infrastructure is poor. China now has some resources, some technology, some experience in infrastructure development so these two countries can cooperate. So, no big problem.

**Haenle:** Did I hear you say that Japan's leadership is trying to lure India to have a close relationship with it, which is a problem for China?

**Ma:** Personally speaking, I don't think it's a big problem for China. China is self-confident because China is a rising power. China has many resources like funds and resources such as technology. Personally speaking, it's not a big problem. Of course, we are constantly thinking about how to restrain the security cooperation between India and Japan. This is a problem.

**Haenle:** My final question. Let me ask you about the economic relationship. If you look at China-India relationship, there appears to be some similarities with the U.S.-China relationship in that there is a high level of economic interaction and cooperation even some say interdependence. Yet, there is a lack of strategic mistrust. With respect to China-India, how do you view the prospects of the economic relationship there in the near-term?

**Ma:** I think China has a good relationship with the United States now. We have an economic relationship like you expressed that is interdependent. It's important for these two big countries.

**Haenle:** You mean China-U.S.?

**Ma:** Yes. The United States is a big power. China is a big power. We have some trouble; you must see that. We have some big trouble. But you can find more fields to cooperate. We should seek more ways to resolve some difficulties. About the China and India relationship, I think China and India's relationship is not like the relationship between China and the United States because the contradiction between China and the United States is big. China and India's contradiction is not big, it's not big like that of China and the United States. So, we resolve basic issues. Just now, you mentioned the economic cooperation between China and India has grown very quick. I think in the

near future, in 5 years, 10 years, China's economic relationship with India, I can say, will be enhanced greatly as will investment and trade and some other cooperation.

**Haenle:** Right. Thank you Professor Ma for spending time with us today. I appreciate you talking to us about China-India relations and President Xi's recent visit. That's it for this edition of the Carnegie-Tsinghua edition of China in the World Podcast. If you would like to read or learn more about China's relations with India, you can find more articles, events, and podcasts on our website at [www.carnegie.tsinghua.org](http://www.carnegie.tsinghua.org). I encourage you to visit the site and see the work of all our scholars at the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center. Thank you for listening, and be sure to tune in next time.