

# Sino - Indian Mutual Perceptions

## Intercultural Students' Discourse on Ontological Security and Identity

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## ABSTRACT

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*A critical review of the history of the discursive formation of Sino-Indian relations suggests that the largely negative mutual perceptions by the Chinese and Indian public and media are opposed by an optimistic discourse of both nations' political and economic elites. This is also accompanied by a juxtaposed, binary discourse of the bilateral relation by members of the Liberal and Realist camp in academia. While the former largely emphasizes mutual economic cooperation, the latter argues that future tensions are inexorable due to the difficult past and territorial issues. 20 semi-structured interviews with Indian and Chinese exchange students in both countries were conducted and analysed with a Critical Discourse Analysis in order to understand to what degree they conform with the dominant discursive formation. The results suggest a stronger Ontological Security fixation of the Indian side on China than vice versa and a strong power imbalance in favour of China. Even though the students made intense use of mutual stereotyping, their overall discourse was optimistic and critical towards the prevalent negative discourse, mutual lack of knowledge and trust. Students tended to emphasize an intensified effort to improve mutual ties through economic and cultural cooperation, exchanges and the solution of the border issue.*

**Keywords:** Sino-Indian Perception, Ontological Security Theory (OST), 'Othering', Autobiographical Self, Critical Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Students

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*“All good people agree,  
And all good people say,  
All nice people, like Us, are We  
And every one else is They:*

*But if you cross over the sea,  
Instead of over the way,  
You may end by (think of it) looking on We  
As only a sort of They!”*

*~ Rudyard Kipling, last strophe of ‘We and They’*

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# 1. INTRODUCTION AND THESIS AIM

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*The first chapter gives a brief introduction into the background of the study, including the formation of the research problem and the main research question.*

## 1.1 Background and context

Recent years have seen a vast list of publications on the post-colonial Sino-Indian relations. A binary academic discourse of realist pessimism and liberal optimism is characterizing the debate, furthermore it has become quite popular to compare both rising nations and to juxtapose them as representatives of an authoritarian and democratic system, respectively. Within the countries themselves, the political and economic elites in both China and India tend to emphasize a neo-Liberal relationship and a cooperative discourse, but the tone of the media and public polls in both states reveal that the general perception among the respective populations remains critical, highly sceptic and rather pessimistic.

It is crucial to note however, that while exchange and communication exist at the political level, the all-over people-to-people contacts between Indian and Chinese citizens remains extremely limited. Despite empirical data indicating that the majority of Indians and Chinese citizens have a negative perception of each other, there seems to be a gap in the literature focusing on a qualitative analysis, view of smaller national sub-groups and the exact reasons for this general negativity.

## 1.2 Aim and purpose of this thesis

One of the most consistent groups in the Sino-Indian exchange are intercultural students from both nations, who have lived and studied in both nations. This study is interested to find out how these individuals view the bilateral relations and whether their perception shows cultural reflexivity, differing from the mainstream. In order to do so, a critical review of the history of literature and discursive formations on the Sino-Indian relations is the first stage of the research process. Being agents with intercultural insights and having lived and studied in both countries, this study then explores Chinese and Indian intercultural students' perceptions of the bilateral relations as mediators between and representatives for at least two nations – China and the Republic of India.

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Therefore, his study draws on the theoretical concept of ‘intercultural students’ and theories of political science, International Relations (IR) and political psychology. Ontological Security describes the complex way individuals or groups make sense of their position and their position in the social world and is a concept that was incorporated from psychology to IR. Closely related is the notion of identity and autobiographical narrative (both on the individual and state-level), often constructed through the differentiation of an ‘Other’.

To summarize, this study aims to shed light on the discursive formation of the post-colonial Sino-Indian bilateral relations and with this as a background, the content of 20 conducted qualitative interviews with intercultural students is analysed with a range of theoretical concepts including identity and belonging, ‘Othering’, Ontological Security, ‘chosen traumas’ and ‘chosen glories’ to see to what degree they rely on the dominant discursive formation or refrain from it.

### **1.3 Research question**

The noted thoughts and related theoretical concepts built the central outset for this thesis, which is merged in the research question:

*“How far do Chinese and Indian students abroad conform with the dominant discursive formation of the contemporary Sino-Indian bilateral relations or differ from it in order to make sense of their intercultural experiences?”*

Directly related to this questions are a number of important sub-questions that will structure the content of the research and guide the analysis:

*How do the students respond to mutual stereotypes?*

*Has their stay abroad increased their reflexivity of cultural differences?*

*How do they predict the future of the future Sino-Indian relations?*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

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*This section gives an overview of the authors' metatheoretical outlook, the methodology including semi-structured interviews and the application of a Critical Discourse Analysis, a brief critical discussion on the outcomes and ethical considerations.*

### 2.1 Ontology and epistemology

The researcher largely believes in a world as it is described in a constructionist ontology. This means that the scientific description of the world cannot grasp one 'reality' since the information has to be processed with the human mind and his or her senses. But human constructions of the social world are in a constant state of revision and transience. Following this understanding of 'reality', a researcher's perception and the produced results are largely influenced by its own social environment and axiology, which is why this approach is antithetical to both objectivism and realism. The ideas, norms and values related to a particular identity will be analysed from a constructivist perspective and regarded as socially mediated in discourse (Bryman 2008, 18f).

Closely related and often interchangeable is the epistemological constructivist viewpoint. Denying a naturalist conception, the researcher is convinced that we do not just 'experience' the world objectively. Our perceptions are channeled through the human mind that is filled with social presuppositions (e.g. era, culture, language) and individual characteristics (such as age, gender, race). Therefore epistemological tools and approaches often include hermeneutics, empathy, myths, narratives, discourses etc. (Moses and Knutsen 2007, 11).

### 2.2 Semi-structured interviews

This study *sample* is based on a total number of 20 interviews which were collected in India and the PRC in Mumbai, Delhi, Shanghai and Beijing at six universities between February and April 2015, respectively. Purposive sampling aimed to find exchange students of both countries who study/ have studied at least six months in the respective other country and, if possible, the interview was conducted in the participants' non-native country. Ten interviews were conducted with Chinese students while they were studying and living in India (four in Mumbai, six in Delhi). In the case of the Indian nationals, the time and organizational restraints did not allow to interview all ten participants in China: Five of them have been



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interviewed in India (briefly after their return from the PRC to Delhi) and the other five while living and studying in Shanghai (one student) and Beijing (four interviewees), respectively. Since it was also aimed to look for potential differences in relation to gender, the goal was to interview five students of each sex for each nation, so that the resulting sample is completely gender-balanced. This was achieved for the sample of Indian students, but not for the Chinese, where the ratio is six male to four female participants. Moreover, other basic demographic variables like name, age, nationality, academic background both in the home and the host country were retrieved.

The process of *contacting* the fitting individuals involved a broad and time-consuming approach which took several weeks and was an on-going process. Public and private universities, academic tutors, language schools, cultural organisations, conference participants and private individuals both in China and India were contacted with an explanatory email or by phone introducing the researcher, thesis aim and research design in order to find appropriate volunteers. Once a contact was established, it proved extremely valuable to rely on a snowball system and to ask the student to introduce more potential interviewees to the researcher to expand the network. The usage of social media which were used in different cultural context was very important and it proved fruitful to download a range of social media applications (e.g. WeChat, QQ, Fb-Messenger) to arrange the interviews.

The *interviews* were conducted with the help of a prepared questionnaire which led the interviewees through a range of questions, inquiring about their stay and their perceptions of the Sino-Indian relations. The interviews were carefully recorded separately by a mobile phone app and a laptop, respectively and the data was stored safely. Moreover, the researcher always brought a hard copy of the interview and took handwritten notes of the most crucial content and details that could not be rendered by the records (like actions and body language) to uncover the underlying structures of speech and action, especially in relation to identity and power structures (Bryman 2008, 494).

The semi-structured nature of the interview means that the order of the questions was flexible and questions often nourished through follow-up questions - which were frequently used to clarify a certain topic or expression and to be more flexible to structure complex statements. The questions were arranged in an order that was meant to “guide” the participant through the interview, leading back to the state of mind before coming to the exchange country and

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starting with personal, simple questions and ending with more abstract, political matters. Most of the interviews lasted around 60-70 minutes.

The interviews were assiduously *transcribed* according to Critical Discourse Analysis. The whole interview was transcribed and hesitations (“...”), filler words (e.g. “Euh”, “Hmm”), emphases and emotional exclamations (“We are not enemies!”) and body language (“(interviewee points with the index finger of his right hand to his head)”) included.

### **2.3 Critical Discourse Analysis**

As it is often noted, the term “Discourse Analysis” has a wide reference and the definition and usage of the term is not unchallenged in academia (Wetherell et al 2001, Cameron 2001). Consequently, a large number of different schools of thought on discourse analysis as method and theory have emerged. Cameron describes a coarse diversion between two main definitions: first, discourse as “language in use” (2001, 10f) standing in the tradition of linguistics and secondly discourses as “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault 1972, 49 in Cameron 2001, 15) centering on the power/knowledge nexus in social life.

A Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was applied in order to uncover “hidden agendas” (Cameron 2001, 123) and various layers of collective presuppositions to understand what is possible to be said in a certain social environment and the limits of what can be thought (Moses and Knutsen 2012: 218 ff). CDA focuses on the role of language as a power resource in relation to ideology and socio-cultural change. Drawing in particular on Foucault (1972), the task is to explore the relationship between discourse and reality and how discourses are constructed in relation to certain phenomena of change. It is applicable for both spoken and written discourse and therefore useful for the analysis of interviews and its written transcripts. CDA lends itself for this research design since it is interdisciplinary and allows research that cuts across existing disciplines (Chouliaraki and Fairclough 1999) such as, in this case, social sciences and Asian studies. It is “critical” in a two-fold fashion:

First, because it looks at the (hidden) interconnection between language and elements of social life<sup>1</sup>. Second, because it is committed to “progressive social change” (Fairclough 2001, 230) and has an emancipatory “knowledge interest” (Habermas 1971) which goes in line with the authors values to uncover some of the (arguably unjustified) reasons for a largely negative

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<sup>1</sup> Fairclough (2001, 234) coins it as “social practices” which includes an interconnected network of social relations, social identities, cultural values, means of production and so forth which are the focus of CDA.

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Sino-Indian mutual perception. Another crucial aspect of CDA is the effort to analyse the “order of discourse” with the intent to understand which discourses are either dominant/ mainstream or marginal/ oppositional (Fairclough 2001, 235). This is extremely helpful for the comparison and analysis of mainstream discourses as propagated by the state/ media in China and India and the individual, possibly alternative ones of exchange students.

## **2.4 Critical reflection and ethics**

Clearly, the conclusions from this small-scale research project are very limited by the *sample number, time and space* and the conclusions do not claim to make larger generalisations. Not only do the presented findings apply only to the small group of individual students who have been interviewed (academics, middle-class, well-educated and young), they are also confined by time and space: In other words, the results are a presentation of a small number of perceptions at a particular (urban) space and the results only representative for the time<sup>2</sup> when the interviews were conducted since values, opinions and impressions tend to be intangible, alterable and open to changes (especially those of young expats in a dynamic, globalized environment).

The fact that the *target group* consisted of students was a critical element that had to be taken into consideration during the analysis. Often equipped with academic tools themselves, curiosity and own research experiences about the research project certainly altered the nature of their responses. Most certainly, the similar age and resembling sociological background and life situation led to a heightened sympathy and social bonding. Moreover, even though among academics, the power differential based on the interviewer’s identity as a white and male researcher may have operated as “signifier of dominance and majority status” (Lago 2006).

Moreover, the fact that the interviews were almost exclusively conducted in English and not in the native *languages* was an issue. Even though all of the interviewees were able to express themselves confidently in English, some of the Chinese individuals were linguistically less sophisticated with the result that some of their explanations lacked clarity and context. The researcher tried to tackle this by using his modest skills of Mandarin, a

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<sup>2</sup> The fact for example that “rape” played a dominant role in many of the Chinese interviews is certainly explainable through the immense media coverage of sexual abuses in India since the infamous 2012 rape incident in Delhi.

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dictionary and by encouraging the students to take all the time they needed to formulate their answers. In relation to the Indian students, the interviewer not able to sufficiently rely on a local language which was no problem, because the overall English level was a lot more sophisticated.

The author of this thesis was seeking to precisely follow the *ethical principles* of the Swedish Research Council (2015). Therefore, the interview did never start without a proper introduction and the presentation of a name card that stated the contact data, position as a student, the university and course name.

The personal data of the interviewees were stored and treated safely in order to guarantee absolute confidentiality. The identities of the interviewees have been carefully concealed (no interview dates or details from the interview that point to the identity of the participants are revealed) without exception, even though most of the participants voiced their consent to quote them directly.

Even though the ethical principles were usually already introduced while getting in touch and arranging the details of the interview, a clear ‘code of conduct’ was then again formally read to the interviewee before the questions and recording (only when clear consent was voiced) officially started. This included the role and identity as researcher, the research topic, guarantee of confidentiality, safe storage of the data and eventually the right to skip questions and to terminate the interview at any time. The interview occasionally touched upon politically sensitive topics, which is why it was always made sure that the interviews took place in a comfortable environment where third parties were either absent or not able to follow the conversation.

### 3. THEORETICAL DISCUSSION AND CONCEPTS

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*The third chapter elaborates on the theoretical framework for this study, including the analysis of discursive formations ('order of discourse') developed by post-modern followers of Foucault, the concepts of Ontological Security, the autobiographical self, 'Othering' and a discussion on international students and their intercultural competences.*

#### 3.1 Ontological Security and competing discourses

The incorporation of Ontological Security into political science and particularly International Relations is fairly recent, but it has since produced a diverse amount of academic literature (cf. Kinnvall 2004, 2007; Steele 2005, 2008; Mitzen 2006; Krolikowski 2008). These works have largely been inspired by the writings of the British sociologist Anthony Giddens. He defines Ontological Security as something that goes beyond the traditional concept of physical safety, namely a "sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual." (Giddens 1991, 243).

In other words, in order to make sense of the world and to feel secure in it, a stable autobiographical narrative that clarifies the relation of the Self with its environment is required (ibid, 243). According to this approach, Ontological Security provides the individual with a positive discourse about the self and identity in order to avoid 'existential anxiety' and maintain psychological sanity (ibid 38-39). Moreover, it becomes significant on a collective level, because Ontological Security-seeking also includes the establishment of trust with other human beings which serves as "a protection of future threats and dangers which allows the individual to sustain hope and courage" (ibid 39) in confrontation with threats that may yet come.

IR theorists have explored this approach to analyse politics on a state level and justified their approach through the argument that not only individuals seek Ontological Security, but also collectives and even states.<sup>3</sup> Mitzen (2006) for example argues that Ontological Security theory (OST) in connection to states can explain apparent anomalies<sup>4</sup> in bilateral relations that are not explainable by merely applying a realist focus on physical security.

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<sup>3</sup> This application does not go unchallenged. Some of the critical voices on the applicability of Ontological Security in IR include, among others, Jackson (2004), Croft (2012) and Krolikowski (2008). The latter for example argues that the recycling of social theories from the individual level and usage for the state-as-a-person is problematic is largely accepted, yet still often used without critical stance (Krolikowski 2008, 109).

<sup>4</sup> The concept of an individual's ability to develop a 'basic trust' towards others (and therefore being either flexible approach to a new environment and the ability to learn) or in contrast, the state of 'anxiety' (blind

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Due to complex global changes, many collective group identities have lost relational ties which gave them Ontological Security in the past (Giddens 1990). This is supported by Nandy in the Asian context who observed that in order to protect their faiths and traditions from foreign influence, some oversea communities in South Asia have become more “aggressively traditional” and “chauvinistic” abroad (1997, 158). One strategy to cope with these tremendous challenges is to “demodernize ” (Berger in Pathak 1998, 22), to turn back time and go back to a safe place where identity was well-defined and the world apparently simpler - or as Catarina Kinnvall puts it - collectives go back to “an imagined past”<sup>5</sup> (Kinnvall 2004, 744).

Kinnvall has developed one of the most prominent and fruitful approaches for Ontological Security and nationalism (e.g. Kinnvall 2004; 2006), which asserts that dominant groups will seek a discourse alienating sub-national groups from the majority both in structural and psychological ways. This exclusion is a reaction to an internal ‘Other’ who does not submit to the main narrative and is thus seen as a threat, hence disturbing the Ontological Security of the dominant group (Kinnvall 2007, 2004).

With the strengthening of capitalist forces and the corresponding weakening of the nation-state, the latter often has to reinvent its legitimacy (Krolikowski 2008, 124). This often means that the state has to prove itself able to maintain rule and order, but it also needs to provide Ontological Security to its citizens. However, this is not always sufficiently achieved and nationalist or radical religious movements often fill the vacuum by constructing a simple message that apparently provides many answers in a rapidly changing world. Consequently, the state (actors), radical movements and other groups (exchange students in this paper) often stand in opposition to each other and literally ‘compete’ for the trust and loyalty of the people via diverging discourses (Kinnvall 2004, 743). This can also be observed in China and India and OST is therefore one of the basic theoretical concepts of this thesis. A post-modern Critical Discourse Analysis is applied to analyse the “order of discourse” of competing discourses being either dominant/ mainstream or marginal/ oppositional (Fairclough 2001, 235) in the context of the Sino-Indian relations.

Krolikowski (2008, 109f) asserts that in order to overcome the oversimplification of many IR approaches applying OST, it is useful to go back to Giddens’ original theory and remember

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attachment to routines) are also applied by some IR theorists at the state-level in order to explain the long-time attachments to (un)healthy relations between nations (Krolikowski 2008, 113f).

<sup>5</sup> Benedict Anderson (1991) has first coined this in his famous “Imagined Communities”, in which he asserts that individuals of a nation perceive themselves as part of a larger group, even though they will never directly have any contact with most of its members.

that corporate entities, thus also states, originate from collective identities<sup>6</sup> that are yet again dependent on individuals' need of Ontological Security. Those individuals are dealing with questions of individual identity and Ontological Security in the first place (ibid 122f). This study applies OST and looks at the discourse of a small number of Sino-Indian intercultural students as members of a larger diaspora of nationals living abroad.

### **3.2 International students as agents of 'intercultural understanding'**

As a society consists of diverse groups, classes, organisations, castes, age groups and socio-political groups of different kinds with very different identities and interests, a dominant narrative hardly ever goes unquestioned. Huysmans (1998) for example has done research on the threat to group identities by internal others, and Delehanty and Steele (2009, 527) have argued that the gendered, largely masculine autobiographical narrative of the state can be challenged by internal groups that have a more 'feminine'<sup>7</sup> identity. However, they can either be "related to" the dominant discourse or stand in opposition in order to transform it (ibid, 531).

The increasing influence of diaspora<sup>8</sup> communities<sup>9</sup> has to be seen in the context of an increasingly globalised world, where the boundaries become "porous and fuzzy" (Kinnvall and Svensson 2010, 285). Hence, diasporas have gained a greater say on their home countries and the sphere of contestation for the dominant discourse is not restricted to the 'internal', geographical territory of a nation. As some have shown, contestation can also come from powerful expatriates, foreign groups and diasporas who "act at a distance" (Carter 2005, 60; Nandy 1997, 158).

One of those groups are international students, a growing population which is engaged a diversity of cross-cultural transitions and exchanges (Wang et al 2015, 52). The number of

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<sup>6</sup>In other words, this approach (e.g. Kinnvall 2006, Steele 2007) rejects Mitzen's treatment of states as monolithic actors and treats them from a constructivist perspective as a complex group consisting of individuals who try to "fulfil the self-identity requirements of their state" (Chacko 2014, 332).

<sup>7</sup> Kinnvall (2004, 671) too lists examples where an idealized "national character" is very much related to gender. It is further argued that these anti-mainstream narratives frequently draw on more 'feminine' characteristics of human conduct such as cooperation, peace, mutual respect, trust and friendship can be in resistance to a pessimist, conflictual discourse (Ruddick 2001, 196).

<sup>8</sup> Safran defines "diasporas" as "minority expatriate communities" that are geographically distant from home, but able to maintain a closeness through myths and memories. They sustain a continued support for their "home" of origin. Diasporas in this modern definition can describe and groups of collectives living abroad, namely political refugees, oversea workers, migrants, alien residents or exchange students (Safran 1991, 83-84). Salman Rushdie has written that migrants are seen as straddling two cultures (cited in Morley and Robins 1995) who can have "multilocale" attachments (Clifford 1997).

<sup>9</sup> Conservative Hindutva ideology for example has become increasingly influential in many Asian overseas communities since the 1990's (cf. Bhatt 2000; Brown 2006).

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exchange students between China and India however, is quite outstanding- because it is so surprisingly limited<sup>10</sup>, taking into consideration the fact that both countries are the most populous countries in the world with a strong focus on education.

In 2011, there was only an absolute number of about 3.000 Chinese students studying in India (in stark contrast to 100.000 in the US). Indian exchange students were only slightly more with an estimated 7.000 students in the PRC in 2011 (and more than 100.000 in the US) (Raman 2011, 351) and approximately 13.000 in 2015 (Daily News and Analysis, 28 April 2015).

It is frequently argued that the “international experience”<sup>11</sup> results in a number of intercultural competences and sensitivities for the students. The exact linguistic term for this however, has been referred to with a range of different formulations<sup>12</sup> (Wang et al 2014, 51). For this thesis, the term ‘intercultural understanding’ or ‘interculturality’ of the students will from now on refer to this complex multitude of competence with the definition of Walton et al (2013, 1) which describes it as “an on-going critically reflexive process involving the development of skills, attitudes and knowledge, necessary for interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.” One of the most central questions related to ‘interculturality’ is whether and to what degree intergroup contact reduces or reinforces (both negative and positive) stereotypes about each other, which has been the focus of a wide range of sociologist, psychological, educational, political and interdisciplinary research (e.g. Alltorp 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006; Kenworthy, Turner, & Hewstone 2005; Coleman 1998, 2013).

The studies have a mixed outcome, often indicating that contact and mutual learning in optimal conditions has a very positive impact on prejudice reduction among individuals and groups (Alltorp 1954; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006, Moline 2009). Other findings suggest that negative contact has a more significant impact on increasingly biased attitudes than positive contact has on reducing them (Barlow et al 2012) and that studies abroad can also reaffirm preconceived stereotypes (Coleman 1998). Moreover, an “international sojourn” as a

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<sup>10</sup> Effectively, the cultural exchange and people-to-people contact remain on a low level (Sidhu and Yuan 2003, 171), despite a number of agreements between the two nations to deepen them (ibid 175). A joint statement in Delhi 2005 promoted cooperation on various cultural levels<sup>10</sup> – with little outcome (Goh 2006, 282) and a similar Declaration was signed in 2003 when the former prime minister visited China (Siddiqi 2009, 64).

<sup>11</sup> Lahedenpra (2000) argues that international learning and interaction with locals leads to a reconstruction of old belief systems and internalization of new beliefs. Others argue that it raises one’s critical self-reflection and sensitivity toward interaction between the “Self” and the “Other” (Papademetre 2003) which results in a process of cultural negotiation (Corbett 2003) and “an awareness of the relativity of all cultures” (Coleman 2013).

<sup>12</sup> Wang et al name “intercultural sensitivity”, “multicultural competency”, “ethnocultural empathy”, “cultural intelligence”, “intercultural competence”, “intercultural adjustment”, “intercultural proficiency”, and “cross-national competence” as some of the most common labels.



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“temporary between-culture stay”(Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001) can be a traumatic event that may include a multitude of problems including weather and food issues, language, accommodation, financial, academia (Brown and Holloway 2008) and that may even lead to identity conflicts and mental unease (Meier and Daniels 2011, Kim 2001). With this in mind, this “critically reflexive process” applied by intercultural Chinese and Indian interviewees is crucial to analyse their discourse.

### **3.3 The autobiographical self and the process of “Othering”**

As clarified above, Ontological Security asserts that the self relies on a dominant, autobiographical narrative. Accordingly, state actors tend to feel attached to this identity in order to make sense of its own politics in the anarchical and chaotic sphere of international relations and to extinguish any threat to this narrative (Delehanty and Steele 2009, 531).

The general narrative of a collective or individual self relies largely on practices and discourses that differentiate ‘ourselves’ from ‘Others’. Thus, Ontological Security too is reliant on a variety of “identity markers” that distinguish the ‘Self’ from the ‘Other’ (Rumelili 2015, 56). By juxtaposing own constructed identity characteristics with the ones of others, the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ are constructed in a symbiotic interdependence (Ogilvie and Ashmore 1991, 286). Coleman (2013, 24) writes that even though these simplistic oppositions between the ‘Us’ and the ‘Other’ are often inaccurate and in conflict with personal identities, people still tend to use them. Moreover, humans seem to think in binary tendencies which offer straightforward categories (ibid 2013). Bauman (2003) argues that this leads to linguistic couples that juxtapose the normal/abnormal, ordinary/bizarre, domestic/wild, the familiar/strange and so on.

Related to the state or citizens of a nation, other insights from social identity construction show us that individuals tend to prefer ‘their’ own chosen group, in relation to ‘outgroups’: the belonging to a certain group gives the individual in question a sense of belonging and raises its self-consciousness. Hence, each member of the respective collective has an interest to improve the status of his or her group in comparison to the ‘other’ because this will positively affect him or herself and increase Ontological Security (Billig and Tajfel 1973; Hogg 1992). In a more negative approach, some have argued that the process of ‘Othering’ is often linked to “demonizing” the other, or in other words, to project on him all the negative traits that one wants to distinguish from the own ‘in-group’ in order to maintain the boundaries between the positive self and the negative other (Volkan 1997, 113; Murer 1999).

It has been argued that especially nationalism and religion can help individuals to reaffirm their threatened sense of ontological security and identity on a collective level, because their “simple answers” can “supply particularly powerful stories and beliefs” (Kinnvall 2006, 742). Pressure to regain<sup>13</sup> a feeling of Ontological Security can be very strong and can come from various actors. It is especially strong if it is related to a narrative of national pride or honour that is being challenged, because the myth of national salvation is often put in contrast with painful events in the national history which are embedded in collective history: “Humiliation is thus one of the modes used to draw ethical boundaries between self and other, between domestic and foreign.” (Callahan 2004).

Volkan (1997, 36) coined these national humiliations that are preserved over time as ‘*chosen traumas*’ which served as a key concept for the Critical Discourse Analysis of the interviews of this study. This powerful memory presents a mental negative psychological recollection of events that befell the group in the past and is usually linked to intense feelings. Others argue that this process (Murer 1999) often leads people to conclude that ethnic, religious or national conflicts are timeless. ‘*Chosen glories*’ (Volkan 1997, 81) on the other hand provide the other side of the coin and boost a groups’ self-esteem and pride, often in opposition to the ‘Other’ who was humiliated. Eventually, both variations of historical narratives are often surrounded by myths and provide a comforting narrative in times of ontological insecurity (Kinnvall 2004, 755).

In order to conceptualize the interviewees *identity*, this thesis applies Nira Yuval-Davis’ (2006) analytical framework for the study of belonging, which is divided in three different levels:

- a) *Social locations*, such as the gender, ethnicity, class, age and so on of a person;
- b) *Identifications and emotional attachments* which aims to analyse the construction of collectives in a specific socio-historical context individuals identify with and
- c) *Ethical and political values* aiming to describe the persons underlying worldview, ideology and political values that shape one’s sense of belonging.

Consequently, the content of the conducted interviews was analysed in order to uncover apparent and hidden discourses of self-identity, ‘Othering’, Ontological Security (both on the individual and the collective level), the nature of Sino-Indian bilateral relations and the construction of ‘chosen traumas’ and ‘chosen glories’ in the history of both nations among intercultural students.

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<sup>13</sup> This is also applicable for the autobiographical narrative of a state, and states can even be “shamed” if they do not act according to their unique and internally constructed self in relation to external events (Steele 2008, 52-54).

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## 4. COMPETING DISCOURSES ON SINO-INDIAN RELATIONS

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*The fourth chapter introduces as a first step of the research process a critical review of the recent conflict-burdened discursive formation of Sino-Indian relations and argues that competing discourses on the 'Other' prevail. These are also reflected by a flawed binary academic paradigm war between Realism and Liberalism in IR.*

### 4.1 Post-colonial history of bilateral relations

After the independence of India in 1947 and the PRC in 1949, the prevailing discourse for the Sino-Indian relations in the early 1950s was "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" (Hindi for 'Indian and Chinese Brothers') (Lal 2009, 41f). The agreement on the famous five principles of peaceful coexistence<sup>14</sup> seemed to clearly indicate communalities in the two nations' political attitudes (Siddiqi 2009, 61).

In the 1960s, the 1962 war dramatically worsened the relations. It emerged largely due to the disputed border shared by China and India in the post-colonial era. The 1962 border war ended with a defeat of the Indian forces and meant the end of the amicable relations. Hence, the slogan "Hindi Chini Bhai Bhai" had changed in a cynical way through the war to a discourse of "Hindi Chini Bye Bye" which indicated the radical change in the bilateral relations (Lal 2009, 42) an intensified rivalry and the appearance of radical 'Othering' through an 'enemy' image (Siddiqi 2009, 62).

The following decade in the 1970s showed a continued souring during the first half in the bilateral relations due to the improvement of the Chinese-Pakistani relations (and support in the 1971 war), China's active propaganda campaign against India and support of dissident groups within Indian territory (Goh 2006, 267). However, the leadership under Deng Xiaoping proved less ideological and more pragmatic than the stance of the Mao era. The PRC showed more restraint in inter-Asian conflicts (Siddiqi 2009, 62).

A number of high-level talks<sup>15</sup> took place in the 1980s and laid the groundwork for bilateral meetings that were primarily concerned with a solution to the border issue (Goh 2006, 268).

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<sup>14</sup> The principles were the following: (1) Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty; (2) mutual non-aggression; (3) mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; (4) equality and mutual benefit; (5) peaceful coexistence (Mansingh 2007, 122).

<sup>15</sup> Chinese Foreign Minister Huang Hua accepted an invitation to India in 1981 and Rajiv Gandhi was visiting China as the first Indian Prime Minister since Nehru (Goh 2006, 268).

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A joint press communiqué referred to the discourse of “peaceful and friendly” cooperation and propagated a non-violent solution to the border issue and a friendly development of relations in other areas (Siddiqi 2009, 63).

A more determined diplomatic effort to improve the Sino-Indian relations was seen in the *1990s*, when the mutual visits of high-ranking politicians and crucial meetings continued<sup>16</sup>. More round talks were followed by actual troop reductions in the disputed regions and the border trade resumed after more than 30 years of sealed borders.

The *2000s* are generally viewed as another decade of deepening relations, underscored by a vast number of mutual agreements and high-level talks. Among them was a ‘Declaration on Cooperation’ in 2005, further confirmations of a peaceful solution to the border issue and indirect confirmations of Tibet as Chinese territory (Goh 2006, 270f).

## **4.2 Bilateral problems and security issues**

The *1962 Sino-Indian war and territorial issues* appear to have deeply impacted the mutual perceptions and discourses. It remains unforgotten in India that China’s armed forces marched into Indian territory despite the 1954 Panchasheel agreement (Panda 2013, 687). The undeclared war ended with the defeat of the Indian troops, a face-loss for Nehru and a strong blow to the young Indian nation – Manson calls it a “humiliation” (2010, 86f). The political commentator and journalist Basharat Peer (6 January, 2010) has noted that the “memory of the 1962 war with China” and “talk of the Chinese interference and aggression [is] everywhere”, similarly Gillian Goh has written that “the 1962 war rankles in Indian historical memory” (Goh 2006, 267). For India, this appears to have been an event that fits the definition of a ‘chosen trauma’ that is strongly remembered and embedded in collective memory. The conflict also gave rise to the perception of the two nations as being competitors and rivals (Huang 2005, Siddiqi 2009).

The rising *aggressive nationalism* in the PRC and India is often ascribed to come from their shared experience of “humiliation” and “loss of greatness” suffered from the hands of the European colonisers in stark contrast to their “ancient civilisations” (Manson 2010, 98; Huang 2005, 640). The relations are crippled by this sometimes very assertive nationalism that is widely recognized to be on the rise in both nations. Obviously, it restricts the liberty of

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<sup>16</sup> Among them Chinese Premier Li Peng (1992), Indian President Ramaswami Venkataraman (1992), former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1993), former Chinese President Jiang Zemin (1996).

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both governments to take a more relaxed stance for the boundary dispute and is actively shaping the discourse and stance towards each other (Panda 2013, 690).

In the case of China, nationalism seems also to be nourished by the “identity crisis in the post-Mao China” (Christensen 1999, 249f; Callahan 2004) and remains secular. A “bottom-up populist sentiment against foreign pressures” from ordinary people expresses itself in various ways such as the consumption of popular films, television shows, posters, cartoons, books (Gries 2004, 3) and is mostly directed against the US and Japan, not preliminary India. Hindutva nationalism on the other hand is embedded both in culture and religion (cf. Kinnvall 2004) and has recently focused mainly on securing ‘national’ borders and likewise on belonging and differentiation of citizenship (Kinnvall and Svensson 2010, 286).

The expansionist world views are also mutually exclusive<sup>17</sup>: While modern Hindu extremists dream of an empire stretching from Afghanistan to Indonesia, claiming that these regions have historically been under Brahmanical influence, Chinese hard-liners refer to the imperial dynasties and thereby mark out a region that covers everything from the Himalayas over Southeast Asia to Far East Russia (Manson 2010, 88).

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<sup>17</sup> Another paradigm war is fought on the cultural level: While China does now officially refer to the controversial 5000 years of Chinese culture (Ross 2014), Hindu nationalist ideology too asserts to be the oldest and greatest culture on earth (Manson 2010, 89).

The *India-US/ Sino-Pakistani nexus* concerns both sides. Especially since the Indo-US civilian nuclear agreement it seems as if

### Which Country Is Greatest Ally/Threat?

Top choice (%)

Views in:	Ally	Threat
Bangladesh	U.S. (43%)	India (27%)
China	Russia (25)	U.S. (36)
India	U.S. (33)	Pakistan (45)
Indonesia	U.S. (28)	U.S. (25)
Japan	U.S. (62)	China (68)
Malaysia	China (27)	U.S. (26)
Pakistan	China (57)	U.S. (38)
Philippines	U.S. (83)	China (58)
South Korea	U.S. (68)	North Korea (36)
Thailand	U.S. (29)	Cambodia (11)
Vietnam	U.S. (30)	China (74)
U.S.	Britain (31)	Russia (23)

Poll 1: Country's greatest ally

there is a growing fear in the PRC that India could become an ally in a US-led coalition of democratic countries (a network running “from Japan to India”) in the area threatening Chinese interests in the future (Krishnan, 5 April 2010). Similarly, India is rebuffed by the Pakistan-China relations, which have continued since Pakistan tried to establish better ties with the PRC in the 1960’s (Siddiqi 2009, 60- 72). The Indian public also bitterly remembers that China backed Pakistan in the 1965 Pakistani-Indio

war (Goh 2006, 267). Asked directly, 45% of Indian citizens view Pakistan as the main threat to India, and only 6% vote for China instead (Pew Research Center, 31 March 2014a). Even though the Sino-Pakistani alliance has suffered, Xi Jinping has just recently proclaimed that he feels as if “going to visit the home of [his] own brother” in an editorial titled “Long Live the Pakistan-China Friendship” in Pakistan’s ‘Daily Times’ briefly before a state visit (Panda, 20 April 2015).

It is important to note that neither China nor India perceive each other as main threats. As visible in the chart<sup>18</sup> above, China clearly sees the US as its main opponent and India is most concerned with Pakistan (Pew Research Center 2014c). Therefore, it is more of an indirect threat perception that originates in being an ally of one’s main competitor that render the Sino-Indian relations so fundamentally complex.

### 4.3 Prevailing academic “paradigm war”

In recent years, both China and India have come to be considered rising and become the focus of a great variety of scholarship, comparisons and predictions (cf. Lynn 2006; Lal 2009; Manson 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Pew Research Center (2014c): “Chapter 4: How Asians View Each Other”, 14 July 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-4-how-asians-view-each-other/>.

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It is now almost accounted as common knowledge to draw a parallel between China and India as the “two oldest continuous civilisations<sup>19</sup> in the world” (Lal 2009, 44), the “greatest civilisations in the history of the human race” (Goh 2006, 263), “ancient political and cultural powers” (Manson 2010, 86), or even “glorious ancient civilisations” (Huang 2005, 631). It has then also become quite common to juxtapose China and India in a systemized manner in terms of population, seize of territory, literacy, GDP, Gini coefficient, exports, industrial output and so on both in schoolbooks (Huang 2005, 632), debates (Lal 2009, 42), and various blogs and websites<sup>20</sup>. Eventually, both nations are often said to have similar domestic problems such as unemployment, regional disparities and the continuous poverty of the rural population (Goh 2006, 278).

It has been noted that the media coverage on the Sino-Indian relations has been both “overly optimistic” and “overly pessimistic” (Goh 2006, 265). Academic literature on the Sino-Indian relations has often led to a binary discourse with oversimplified<sup>21</sup> and opposed linguistic terms as described by Coleman (2013), which juxtaposes a friend versus foe relationship. In terms of IR theory and policy analysis it has often resulted in the oversimplified division<sup>22</sup> between a *liberal-optimistic versus a realist-pessimistic* explanation<sup>23</sup> of the contemporary political and economic realities. The camp of realists predicts an inevitable power rivalry between the two, while the neo-liberalists believe in growing multilateral cooperation and interdependence (Panda 2013, 669; Lamy 2011, p. 117). To quote Foucault (1972, 50f), these discursive relations are “established between institutions, economic and social processes, behavioural patterns, systems of norms, techniques, types of classification, modes of classification” that allows certain statements that are part of those discourses on bilateral relations and excludes others. This division into two “main camps” has led to an analytical cleavage or “paradigm war” (Holslag 2010, 3), resulting in black and white painting which

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<sup>19</sup> The well-known journalist Edgar Snow might have been the one who first coined the expression of China and India as the “oldest continuous civilisations in the world” and their “close religious and cultural ties” (Snow 1944).

<sup>20</sup> Among some of the blogs and websites where it is not uncommon to find heated/ nationalist debates trying to decide which country is ‘greater’ are <http://country-facts.findthedata.com/compare/12-122/China-vs-India> , <http://www.economist.com/blogs/dailychart/2011/10/comparing-india-and-china> .

<sup>21</sup> Many of these works have been severely criticised and doubted, namely, because they are often based on populist, overlysimplified notions of economics and politics that lead to dubious relativism, stereotypes or simplistic assessment (Ma and Feo-Giet 2014, Bardhan 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Recently there have been some publications - even though in comparison to Liberalism and Realism on a very small scale - of Social Constructivism (e.g. Yang Lu (2013): “Dynamics of National Interest and National Identity. A Constructivist Approach to the India-China Relations (2003-2012)”.

<sup>23</sup> Realism: e.g. Manson (2010) and Sidhu/ Yuan (2003); Liberalism: Goh (2006) and Raman (2011); a comparison of both schools can be found in Holslag (2010) and Siddiqi (2009).



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has influenced countless academic publications, often cynically labelled as “Dragon and Elephant airport books” (Ma and Feo-Giet 2014).

Popular analyses often try to use both countries as representative case studies to decode the overall relationship between *authoritarianism or democracy* and development (Bardhan 2010). India as an example for democracy and the PRC for an authoritarian regime have aroused a lot of discussion<sup>24</sup>, especially in relation to comparison of economic and political success (Lal 2009, 43).

Others describe their historical relations<sup>25</sup> and try to deviate patterns that will predict the future relationship, using a mixture of liberal/optimistic analytical tools that stress cultural closeness, economic cooperation and shared interests (Lynn 2006, Lal 2009) or a realistic and pessimistic approach that calculates future conflicts and estrangement because of geographic competition and border conflicts (Manson 2010, Holslag 2010). In the Sino-Indian comparison, the ‘rivalry’ is often explained to derive from the different political systems of ‘authoritarianism’ and ‘democracy’ (the so-called “democracy versus party state” binary debate (Raman 2011, 349)), respectively. Moreover, China is often described as an economic success story and India in contrast as a relative failure (Huang 2005, 631).

This paper aims to avoid this ontological and ideological cleavage. Both ‘states’ shall not be regarded as monolithic “metaphysical abstractions”, but as Holslag (2013, 3) writes as “complex amalgamation of actors, interests and expectations”.

## **4.4 Ontological Security, Identity and Othering**

### ***4.4.1 The People’s Republic of China***

Depictions of India as poor and unorganised as a result of an immature democracy have served as a stark contrast and negative ‘Other’ for the PRC’s self-image as a successful and orderly regime. Accordingly, most Chinese people fall back to a negative set of images and concepts when thinking about India, among them the disastrous living conditions of the lower castes and the defeat on the 1962 border war. China has undergone a variety of fundamental and often violent and traumatic identity changes and has been described as an insecure actor

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<sup>24</sup> The simplified relation between political system and economic success has evidently been challenged by a number of scholars (e.g. Huang 2008, Bardhan 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Very early encounters through philosophy, art, culture and especially the spread of Buddhism from India to China indicate continuous relations between the two cultures (Lal 2009, 44). The 7<sup>th</sup> century Chinese monk Xuanzang (appr. 602-664) who seems to have travelled India extensively and inspired the later book “Journey to the West (西遊記)” is well-known in both countries (Lal 2009, 44; Indian embassy 2015).

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with “rigid basic trust” (Krolikowski 2008, 117). The low level of Ontological Insecurity dates back to the “encounter with the West” which meant traumatic exploitation, semi-colonization and a radical challenge of the autobiographical self of the ‘Middle Kingdom’ (Teng and Fairbank 1979; Gries 2004).

A culture of remembering national humiliation is essential to Chinese nationalism and encompasses the so-labelled ‘Century of Humiliation’ (1839-1949) that started with the first Opium War (1839-1842). This discourse is meant to preserve the memory of the corruption of Chinese sovereignty and loss of territory and how the CCP overcame this weakness (Callahan 2004, 202f).

#### ***4.4.2 The Republic of India***

The traumatic partition of Pakistan (1947) and the resulting extensive migration and communal violence set the conditions for a long-time antagonism between the two nations (Kinnvall and Svensson 2010, 276). Kinnvall (2004, 755) argues that the Hindu-Muslim conflict is one of the defining ‘chosen traumas’ for India. Similar to China, the “civilizational exceptionalism” remains a crucial part of India’s biographical narrative and therefore its understanding of Ontological Security (Chacko 2014, 331).

The fondness of the US of democratic India as a strategic partner also derives from India being an alternative to China which is seen as a threat: “India is the un-China” (Elliot 2006). What Priya Chacko (2014, 335) wrote about the US, namely that “American exceptionalism combined universalism, moral clarity, national prestige and military power into a potent ontological mix” can easily be transferred to modern India. Namely, cultural exceptionalism, Hindu values, national prestige, a democratic culture (in opposition to Chinese authoritarianism), an economic rise and military ambition are at the core of Ontological Security for the Indian state and the majority of its people.

#### **4.5 Dominant discourses on the mutual relations**

With both countries arguably being in the state of ‘power transition’, perceptions of power are crucial and shaped by leaders in both nations to project certain images (Johnston 2003). Foucault has claimed that language is power and that those who wield the ability to produce discourse have the power to make it “true” (Foucault 1980, 201). Even though it is often assumed that “liberal-pluralistic” societies offer more space for open discussion and competing discourses (Panda 2013, 686f), various studies in China show that Chinese

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nationalistic discourses are by no means uniform but differ among different groups (Krolikowski 2008, 129).

Consequently, even though there may be groups who have more privileges and therefore more influential means to make a discourse true, this section shows that there is a variety of various discourses on the mutual relations in both countries.

#### ***4.5.1 The discourse on the state-level***

It has been argued that the Ontological Insecurity experienced by individuals and collectives as a result of late-modern globalization (Chacko 2014; Kinnvall 2004) can lead to state elites seeking out the respective agents of other states to create a collective identity as an assuring step in establishing international order<sup>26</sup> (Bially Mattern 2005, 22).

The undeniable similarities in the history and demographics have largely meant that the *Chinese Communist Party* frames India as the “failed other” in a stark juxtaposition with its own system and identity to legitimize its rule (Huang 2005, 632). However, the recent official government-level discourse has been predominantly and consciously positive, using formulations that are almost identical with the ones from the late 1990s on. Both the emphasis of historical and cultural parallels have produced the neologism ‘Chindia’ (China plus India) which is widely used in reference to the discourse of neoliberal cooperation<sup>27</sup> (Panda 2013, 688).

The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs lists further developments due to “frequent high-level exchanges”, at the area of defence, economy, the boundary issue and “cultural and people-to-people exchanges” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2015). The argumentation stresses neo-liberal ideas of economic interdependence and mutual complementarity. Xi Jinping personally underscored the discourse of deepened economic ties during a September 2014 visit to India. He referred to the “time-honoured history of bilateral exchanges and the profound friendly feelings between the two peoples”, stressing that both countries should “deepen” their “strategic mutual trust” (Embassy of the PRC 2014).

Jagannath Panda (2013, 687) argues that both the *economic and the political elites in India* have decided to engage with China. While this engagement on the political level is described

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<sup>26</sup> Even though diplomatic formulas often seem to be mere platitudes (cf. Panda, 20 April 2015), it has been argued that diplomatic rhetoric remains the main source for bilateral perception (Johnston 2003).

<sup>27</sup> This goes hand in hand with the PRC trying to persuade the world that it has only peaceful intentions, stressing its discourse of a “peaceful development” (Raman 2011, 343).

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as “cautious” because the discourse of the ‘rise of China’ is widely acknowledged and seems to be unavoidable, the industrial community strongly stresses the economic opportunity.

The term ‘Chindia’ was thus also first coined by Indian politician Jairam Ramesh. It was meant to express the economic interdependence and further argues that China is the ‘world factory’ (agriculture, manufacturing) while India is the ‘world office’ (IT, software, service industry) which has created the belief that both nations’ economies share a complementarity (Siddiqi 2009, 72), an arguably flawed presupposition that has also often been quoted in academia (e.g. Sidhu and Yuan 2003, Siddiqi 2009, Goh 2006) and just recently been challenged<sup>28</sup>.

Currently, the official level refers to what has been coined as a “Strategic and Cooperative Partnership” which includes the economic ties and also to “promote peace and development in Asia and the world as a whole” where there is enough “space [...] for the simultaneous development of India and China” (Indian Ministry of External Affairs 2015b).

During his September 2014 visit in China, Narendra Modi called China a “worthy competitor” (Jha, 18 September 2014), but also personally referred to the “two ancient civilizations” who have “shared interest in a peaceful and stable region” which requires “mutual trust and confidence” to “realize the enormous potential in our relations” (The Hindu, 20 September 2014). He also stressed that China was not India’s “arch-enemy” (Jha, 18 September 2014).

#### ***4.5.2 Academia and think-tanks***

It has been noted that the overall mutual tendency in domestic Sino-Indian security analyses seems to be hawkish and realist in nature, leading to biased and worst-case assumptions (Sidhu and Yuan 2003, 170). However, many *Chinese scholars* believe that India is inferior to the PRC since it is lacking the economic qualifications necessary for a great power which they contrast with the Chinese growth model. Still, they also acknowledge that India is stronger in other areas such as human rights and multilateral negotiations (Raman 2011, 348).

The majority of the *Indian academics and think-tanks* seems to be more sceptic and often depicts the Republic of China as a security concern. A strong focus among the Indian

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<sup>28</sup> Pranab Bardhan for example challenges common “myths” about China and India in his popular “Awakening Giants. Feet of Clay.”(2010) and Yasheng Huang argues in his 2011 “The myth of economic complementarity in Sino-Indian relations” that the complementarity is fantasy based upon political will and that the two economies are rather competitive than complementary.

strategic community on the ‘China Threat Theory’ prevails and has led to some fatalist prognoses<sup>29</sup> in the past (Manson 2010, 92).

#### 4.5.3 *The perception of the media*

Especially the state-controlled *media in the PRC* have been increasingly influential in an anti-Indian coverage which is likely to signal the Chinese policy elites’ scepticism. (Manson 2010, 97).

The *media in India* seems to overly paint the PRC in negative colours as a threat (Panda 2013, 687). Anti-Chinese sentiments are daily routine with some media drawing on nationalist concepts, requesting New Delhi to resist “imperialist” China and put pressure on it to guarantee a free Tibet and regain territory in the border region (Manson 2010, 92.)

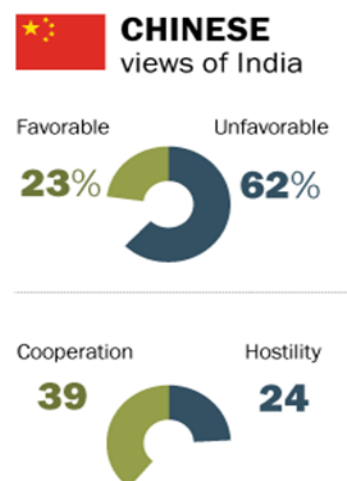
#### 4.5.4 *The prevailing discourse among the populations*

Public opinion during the last years showed continuous negative reviews of Chinese and Indian people towards each other. This clearly shows that the largely positive discourse on the state-level has not won over the general population in either country (yet) and that mistrust and scepticism prevails.

Apparently, the *Chinese public’s* threat perception of India has been rising during the last years as recent polls suggest (Zhu, 11 June 2009) even though it has been argued that India is not eyed as a serious rival yet (Shirk 2005, 95). A 2009 poll by the Global Times revealed that a stunning number of 90% found that India represented a “principal threat to Chinese security” (Zhu, 11 June 2009).

A survey<sup>30</sup> from 2012 indicated that 62% of the questioned citizens viewed India as “unfavourable” and 23% as “favourable”, when asked about bilateral cooperation however, a majority of 39% saw the Sino-Indian relations as cooperative and only 24% as hostile (Pew Research Center,

16 October 2012a). Similarly, a 2013 survey found that 23% of Chinese saw ‘India’s



Poll 2: Chinese views of India<sup>1</sup>

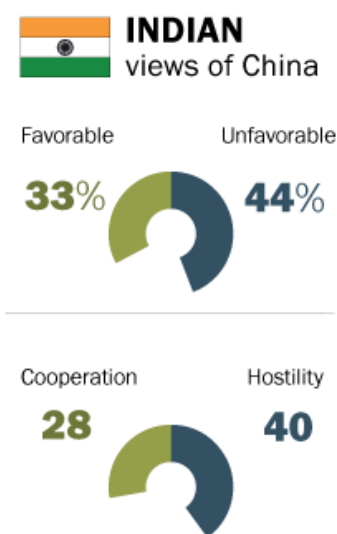
<sup>29</sup> Analysts point to the critical situation of being situated both geographically and politically between the two nuclear powers Pakistan and China (Jaffrelot 2007, 307)

<sup>30</sup> Pew Research Center (2012a): “How the Chinese View Other Countries”, 16 October 2012, Online: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/10/16/how-the-chinese-view-other-countries>

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influence' mainly positive and 45% unfavourable (BBC 2013, 9). Clearly, there is deep mistrust between the two towards each others' economic expansion.

It has been argued that India's "liberal-pluralistic" society allows for a more open and critical policy discussion which means a certain "superiority" over an authoritarian system. But this also means that India's discourse and policy approach on China has been fragmented under different political parties. Still, the predominant perception of China by the *Indian people* seems to remain that of a "competitor or rival" (Panda 2013, 686f). According to the Pew Research survey<sup>31</sup> (16 October 2012a) 44% of Indian citizens held an unfavorable view of China. In contrast to the Chinese counterpart, a majority views the mutual relations as one of hostility (40%) instead as one of cooperation (28%).



Poll 3: Indian views of China

A 2012 public survey<sup>32</sup> (Pew Research Global Attitudes 2012b, 93)

questioning to what extent China was a threat, indicates that most Indians at that point in time and context viewed China as a threat, 27% of the participants even chose to opt for a "Very serious threat".

	Q127d How serious of a threat is d. China to our country? Is it a very serious threat, a somewhat serious threat, a minor threat or not a threat at all?					
	Very serious threat	Somewhat serious threat	Minor threat	No threat at all	DK/Refused	Total
India	27	26	11	5	32	100

Table 2: Indias' threat perception of China

Similar surveys in 2013 and 2014 did not bring any fundamental changes, with the percentage of citizens in a favorable<sup>33</sup> view of China around 35% (2013) and 31% (2014) and unfavorable 41% (2013) and 39% (2014), respectively (Pew Research Center, Spring 2014b).

## 4.6 Final Summary

This chapter has shown how regional discourses on the Sino-Indian relations strongly draw upon similar sets of binaries. The post-colonial relations are dominated by unsolved territorial

<sup>31</sup> Pew Research Center (2012a): "How the Chinese View Other Countries", 16 October 2012, Online: <http://www.pewglobal.org/2012/10/16/how-the-chinese-view-other-countries/>.

<sup>32</sup> Pew Research Global Attitudes (2012b): "Dataset 2012", p. 93, Online: <http://www.pewglobal.org/category/datasets/?download=27361> (25.03.2015).

<sup>33</sup> Favorable combines "very favorable" and "somewhat favorable" responses. Unfavorable combines "very unfavorable" and "somewhat unfavorable."

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issues and nationalist ambitions on the one hand and growing interdependence resulting from the economic rise of both nations on the other. This results in an asymmetrical cleavage between a Realist and a Liberal discursive formation, represented both in the competing national discourses and the academic approaches. The largely optimistic rhetoric of national elites and politicians stands in strong contrast with the pessimistic discourse of the media and the majority of the people in both countries, leading to a flawed binary discourse which does not do justice to the complexities of social reality where more critical reflexivity might be found.

## 5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE DATA

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*This section applies a Critical Discourse Analysis on the data from interviews conducted with ten Chinese and ten Indian intercultural students, aiming to look for instances of cultural reflexivity and to uncover constructions of ‘Othering’, Ontological Security and identity in relation to the Sino-Indian bilateral relations.*

### 5.1 Review of the Chinese interviews

Economic and career-related considerations were apparently one of the main reasons for Chinese students to come to India. Four of them explained their choice with the argument that Indian university fees were lower, five hoped that it would be beneficial for their future job perspective. Six of ten had chosen India in order to improve their English. Most of them had heard of India’s reputation in natural sciences, especially IT and economics and pursued corresponding studies.

#### 5.1.1 “Othering” and identity

Six students clearly answered the question whether it was overall a good or bad experience positively. It became evident during the interviews that all students had enhanced their knowledge about Indian culture and were influenced by it in one way or another. Bailong for example exclaimed:

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*“I love India! I love some of the differences in comparison to China”.*

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Only one student directly expressed the negative experiences to dominate and the remaining three students giving a somewhat mixed answer without a clear position, such as Lining when she compared it to a toxic relationship (to a man):

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*“When I say I love India it’s half-half true.[...] It’s like love. Like, ... because... you love him, so sometimes you are angry with him.”*

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Six claimed to consider staying longer in India in the future, usually for work or studies. Four students made it very clear that they did not have any Indian friends at the beginning but that it changed positively over time – three reported to have made Indian friends after several



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months. Five students also voiced that they were initially home sick and averted by India, but all reported that they eventually got used to their new home.

This may also explain why the respective students were very eager to describe Indians and the *positive Indian mentality* with a number of attributes – before voicing a positive statement, hesitations were extremely limited. The overall rhetoric was largely positive, striking ten students out of ten mentioned at least once that they found Indian people “friendly”. Closely related was the impression that Indians “smiled” (5) a lot. Yuran for example said that

*“the smiling is the thing I like most [about Indians]. Chinese smile, but it’s a fake smile.”*

Three positively expressed their curiosity and their pacifist behaviour, especially in the treatment of animals.<sup>34</sup> Among the most *neutral and interpretable labels* for India and its customs were “diverse” (5), “incredible” (5), “mysterious” (3), and even “funny” (3). This is also explainable with the fact that half of them directly admitted that they had little or no previous knowledge and expectation about India. Most prominent was the diplomatic observation that India and China were completely “different” (7). However, a majority of six directly mentioned that they found India “polluted” and “dirty”, four called it “poor” and seven stated that “rape” was a big problem in India and were concerned about women’s safety, which left a negative impression.

Consequently, the Chinese students made ample usage of *antithetic ‘Othering’*. There were a number of adjectives which stood in direct contrast to the description of a Chinese identity. Ogilvie and Ashmore (1991, 286) argue that the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ are often constructed through a juxtaposed “symbiotic interdependence”. The Chinese students participating in this study made ample usage of these “dichotomies” (e.g. normal/ abnormal; familiar/ strange and eventually, Us/ ‘Other’) (Coleman 2013, 25).

Both positive and negative stereotyping occurred. To begin with, four students argued that Indian people were not materialistic, genuinely spiritual or “religious” (6), whereas the same students also complained that their fellow Chinese citizens only thought about money and possessions. Five contrasted Indian people as (happy)/Chinese as (unhappy) which was often an explanation for Indians being satisfied with less. There was, however, also a large number of negative stereotyping of the ‘Other’. The overwhelming number can be summarized with a rather concrete narrative of “unreliability”, which was depicted by all the interviewees.

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<sup>34</sup> Rather entertaining were the personal anecdotes of some students with animals, usually cows, walking in the streets. They often related it to the Indians’ religiosity and pacifism, but also underdevelopment. The reactions ranged from amusement to shock, with Chan reporting: “[Then] the cow is walking in the road, it’s very dangerous! ... Once I saw an elephant on the highway – I was shocked!”

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Among the most common dichotomies for Indians/ Chinese was “chaotic” (3)/“in order” (4), “unpunctual” (4)/“punctual” (3), “slow” and “inefficient” (both 3)/“efficient” (2), reliable (3)/“unreliable” (4) and even “lazy” (3)/“hard-working” (7). Li found that

*“[...] the society in India ... they don't follow the order. It's crowded and chaotic- luan<sup>35</sup>! In China you have regulations and people follow it or they will be punished”.*

Negative statements were often accompanied by ellipses and hesitations. This is explainable with the interviewees' awareness that those answers did bear the risk of sounding xenophobic. Another strategy was what has been labelled by sociologist Erving Goffman as “relayer”. Negative stereotyping was often attributed to others, thereby avoiding to be personally related to the statement, but still being able to include it in one's own discourse and thereby often signalling conveyed agreement (Cameron 2001, 149).

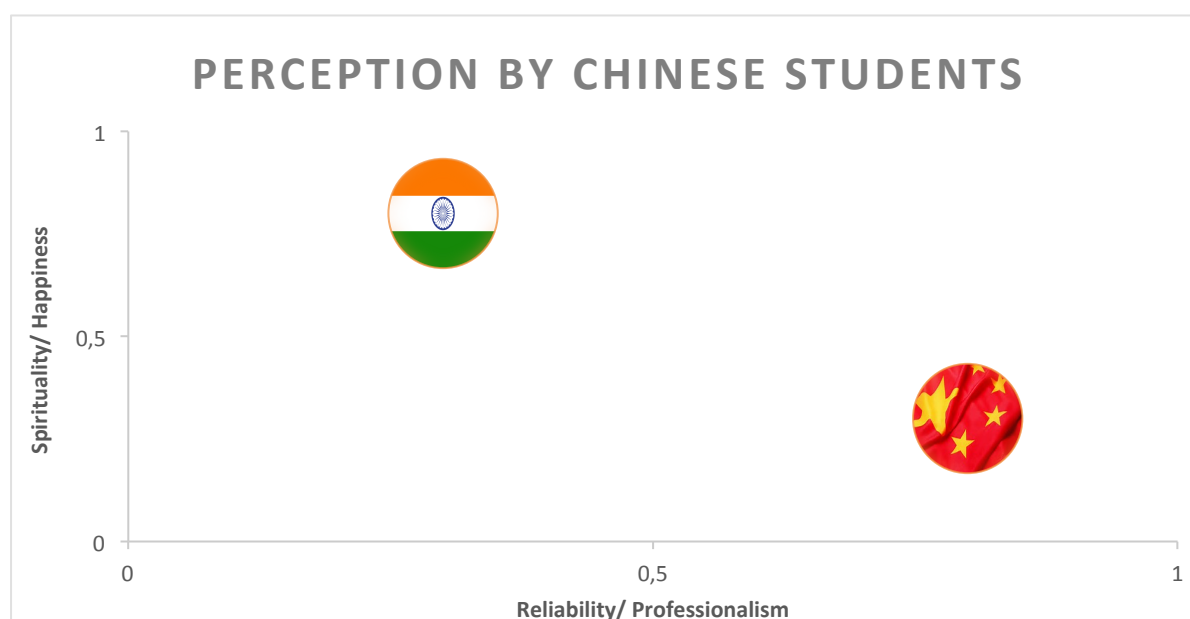


Chart 1: Comparative spirituality perception based on Thesis' data analysis

It was also striking what a prominent role “food” took in the interviews. The issue was often mentioned very early during the conversation by the students themselves and was an emotional topic. Lining used an extreme expression, but is quite representative:

<sup>35</sup> 乱, Mandarin for chaotic. Interestingly, this word has a strong socio-political meaning in ancient Chinese and was traditionally used to make a strong division between the ‘civilized’ Chinese-Confucian sphere of influence and the ‘barbarians’ who resided outside the Middle Kingdoms territory and followed other non-Chinese customs.

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*“Yeah, food is a big problem for us. [...] We don’t know what it is, how to make it. Some of it looks like shit.”*

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Except for one student, all reported that food was a big issue, expressing disgust, frustration and even horror. Indian eating habits were seen in stark contrast to Chinese as less civilised - sharing food and eating with bare hands labelled as “dirty”/ “not hygienic”(4). Only three indicated that they got more used to it after some time. An astonishing eight out of ten Chinese exchange students reported their *family and friends’* irritation, shock, concern and sometimes mockery after being informed about the students’ decision to study in India. Five were urged by friends to go to the US or Europe instead and four reported that “rape” was a big issue.

There seemed to be a common misconception of Indians as mainly of Buddhist faith (4), with many drawing on the famous, but ancient book “Journey to the West”. Rather amused, Yong made fun of his fellow nationals and neglected common stereotypes by remarking that

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*“In fact, Chinese people don’t know India well. And ... India for Chinese people means yoga, Buddhism and mystery.”*

---

The majority found Indians hospitable (7), but also experienced biased *discrimination*. At least four reported Indians irritation with the fact that a Chinese would come to India to study, with two of them reporting that people “teased” them and argued that they only came because India was more developed than China. It was common to ask them whether they knew Kung Fu/ Jackie Chan (4). Lining said in an amused voice that

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*“They will talk about Jackie Chan and they will say ‘in China you have Kung Fu’.”*

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It seemed also common to mistake them for citizens of other Asian countries and inquire about supposedly “exotic” food habits, which led some of the students to the conclusion that Indians were sometimes impolite or insensitive.

The experience abroad had a certain *impact on identity*. Firstly, in terms of Yuval-Davis’ (2006) definition of belonging ( *a*) *social location*), the Chinese students were all in their mid-20’s, masculine/ feminine, university students, well-educated, most likely part of the Chinese middle class and likely (future) members of the elites - therefore on a fairly high level of the social “power axis”.

*b) Identifications and emotional attachments:* In general, the Chinese students clearly identified themselves with Chinese culture, language, economic success and the growing

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influence of China in the international community. The comparison with India only seemed to supplement their confidence about their nation.

However, the stay in India did challenge the previous identity of some students. Three of them made it very clear that they had become “happier” in India or that it had “opened their eyes”. Clear identity markers were blurred, which confused some of them. As Lin put it:

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*“I feel half Indian now - haha.”*

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There were many indices that most of the Chinese students had indeed begun to have “multilocale” attachments, maintaining political and social ties with both the host and the home country (Clifford 1997).

c) *Ethical and political values:* India’s political system was perceived as ineffective and slowly developing, which seemed to reinforce an attachment to the ‘superior’ Chinese authoritarianism. Clearly, in direct comparison the impression of the “ineffective” Indian mentality was transferred to the political and economic level and both intrinsically interlinked. All eight students who gave a direct evaluation in relation the performance of both political systems and the economic success stated that the Chinese worked better. Seven of them complained about early closing times of shops, public offices and the difficulty/ impossibility to deal with visa issues, which was often considered as harassment and even blamed on the ambiguous bilateral relations and resulting scepticism towards them as Chinese nationals. A large number expressed “disappointment” (8) towards the infrastructure and transportation, which was seen as a lot worse than China’s. On several occasions, the interviewees blamed it on the corruption in general or even specific officials like Bailong:

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*“They only say, they don’t do anything. It’s only show. The president is the same: ‘I will improve the peoples’ life’. [...] Even the Indians will make jokes [about it].”*

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The label “show” is quite representative for a criticism that was closely related to the political system, which was seen as unsuccessful and ineffective Indian version of ‘real’ democracy:

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*“To be honest, the Chinese system works better.[The] Indian system has democratic familiarities, but it doesn’t work well”. (Yong)*

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Moreover, some students were very clearly sceptic to call the Indian system a genuine democracy, often contrasting it with the “original” model from the “West” or even the “US”.

Xiaoyu claimed that

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*“even Indians think their democracy is kind of wrong. It’s not like western style. They are not so successful in democracy.”*

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Five students defended the Chinese Communist party’s authoritarianism and another six voiced a critical stance towards Indian democracy. A common notion was that *“India can learn from China”*. A direct comparison led many students to the perception that China had succeeded in economic terms where India had failed and that India had even made them positively reconsider Chinese authoritarianism. Lining said that

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*“Before I came here I thought Chinese government is bad, because we are not free. [...] India now is like China before, they can grow faster. But the [Indian] government is not working, they just give show, but no funding.”*

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The result was a strong hierarchy, where the Chinese authoritarian system led by one party was superior over Indian democracy:

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*“See, we don’t have any opposite party. There is only the CCP. But it seems as if this one party is more efficient than democracy.” (Li).*

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Naturally, in combination with the students’ sympathy towards their Indian hosts, this created a discourse where the good-willed “superior” teacher invites his immature junior to eventually accept his/ her authority. This becomes clear when Lining uses a parental comparison and supplements it with rhetorical questions which express her frustration:

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*“Almost like a mother hate the children. Why you study so bad? Like that: sometimes hate, sometimes love. [...] Why are your economy so bad, why don’t you grow up fast?”*

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Interesting to note is the fact that two students suggested a ‘combined’ political system that supposedly intertwined the “best parts” of both, which clearly shows that the Indian system was not only criticised, but also served as inspiration. It relied on the idea to draw on political and civic freedoms and to combine it with a stronger political leadership.

In Li’s

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*“ [...] point of view, I would like to combine ... together. Because China needs democracy- but India needs central power. [...] To take advantage from both”.*

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Chan sounded similar and proved that he was inspired to think outside the box of strictly defined political systems:

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*“We should combine them. Maybe in developing countries, you should give more central control, [...] but in the end it should be democratic, where the people vote for their rights”.*

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Inconceivably, the Indian model impressed some of the Chinese students and inspired their fantasy about an improved Chinese system.

### **5.1.2 Chinese Ontological Security**

Some students stated that the PRC was not really considering India as an equal, but that most Chinese citizens admired the ‘West’. Accordingly, seven were then surprised by the Indian “*obsession with China*” and argued that Chinese nationalism was rather directed towards Japan (5) or towards the US (2). Bailong for example said:

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*“1962, the war between India and China. [...] At the time, we never thought about India. We were looking at America. Also today, yes, we compare with America. But India always compare to China... mostly of military.”*

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It was clear that the Chinese students were astonished by what they frequently called an Indian “obsession” with China as a competitor and the remembrance of the 1962 border war. Seven of them were clearly surprised at the fact that so many Indians still remembered 1962. Some had hardly or never heard about the war before coming to India. Asked about mutual humiliations, Yazhen stated:

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*“No, Chinese don’t think about 1962 anymore. It’s more important to India.”*

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Xiaoyu declared that

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*“they feel more humiliation in their heart - they say they have been defeated by the Chinese.”*

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and Yong said that

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*“[...] sometimes I feel like some Indian scholars [...] can’t forget this border conflict.”*

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Five of those who discussed the war were male and discussions about it was illustrated by Ruoyun as an appropriate theme of cross-national male bonding:

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*“[We] just make fun. And they also talk about Chinese army, soldiers, you know- war. Yeah, they say, because we are boys, we like to talk some war. Like in 1962, China-India war.” (Ruoyun).*

Lining, female, used an interesting phrase stating that both nations behaved

*“You know, like children. If you lose, you will really hate him. Next time I will fight with him again, but I will win. Like that. They just always look at China. [...] They train army, because maybe one day we will have war between China and India.”*

First of all, by relating to the interviewer (“You know”), Lining tried to socially bond with the interviewer to give her statement more credibility. Moreover, she (subconsciously) originally illustrated the conflict as a genderless (“children”), then male (“I will fight with him again”) and highly immature conflict, relating to a common theme of boys getting into a petty fight, indicating her distaste for the conflict and challenging the pessimist approach.

The interviews seem to give first indices for a ‘chosen trauma’ (Volkan 1997, 36) from the Chinese perspective: The Chinese interviewees gave strong evidence for a negative psychological recollection of the 1962 war experienced by their Indian acquaintances. A strong culture of remembering and interest to discuss the matter with Chinese nationals occurred strange to them exactly because the PRC seems to have moved on, being distracted by other events (such as the Nanjing massacre<sup>36</sup>) and foes (like the US and Japan) as several interviewees clearly pointed out.

### ***5.1.3 Perception of bilateral relations***

To conclude, eight of the students said that the mutual perceptions was that of “friends”, with none of them referring to the term “enemy”. Clearly, many of them transferred their positive personal experience on the collective and state level like Yin:

*“We are not enemies, we are friends”.*

Only two were hesitant to use either term and gave a more nuanced answer, such as Xiaoyu who disagreed with the term “enemies”, but concluded that

*“friends... it’s also hard to say.”*

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<sup>36</sup> In case of further interest, please read Karl Gustafsson (2014): “Memory Politics and Ontological Security in Sino-Japanese Relations”, Asian Studies Review, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 71–86, Routledge,

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It was interesting, however, that five also mentioned that that the “common Chinese” did not like Indians very much – only two believed that they did. It might be a hint that the students were influenced by competing discourses and referred – depending on question and context – either to the liberal-optimistic or the negative-realistic perception.

It was also clear, however, that most of them held very optimistic (7) views about the bilateral relations, stating that the future relations would be based on “cooperation”. However, three students also raised their concern that there might be future conflicts (“war”) between the two nations and six argued that a solution of the border issue was crucial for the mutual relations.

The design of the interview often supported a direct Sino-Indian comparison, but the participants themselves often made use of it where no respective question required it. Many followed the popular discourse and emphasised similarities on the historical and cultural level. The “two larges nations in the world” (voiced four times) were both seen as representing traditional values in relation to society hierarchies and families by five students.

There was very strong impression among the Chinese students that there was a fundamental *lack of mutual knowledge about each other* (5). Seven of them stated that “mutual understanding” and cultural exchange was important and needed to foster future relations.

In her final sentence Yuran, concluded that

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*“if they get in touch more, of course they will understand more. So the misunderstandings will be avoided.”*

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Three voiced their plans to get directly involved in either academia or student exchanges to enrich both populations knowledge about each other. Yazhen for example said that he had “*now many friends*” and “*want[s] to help them to do more cooperation.*”

Six of them were very critical towards the Chinese media (*Chan: “They cover rape, living conditions, border issue and air pollution.”*) and blamed the negative perception on them. At the same time, another five also mentioned that the coverage on China by the Indian media was equally biased in a negative way, such as Xiaoyu:

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*“[People] read a lot about India, the news in China on India are negative one, also like Indian reports on China.”*

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Despite several of them being sceptic about the biased coverage of the Chinese media, two directly raised the suspicion that it is a strategy of the CCP to discredit democracy, since the media often argued that Indian poverty was a direct result of a failed mass democracy.



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The interviews' content also indicated a strong hierarchy related to knowledge based on the experience abroad by which most of the interviewees dismissed the "common people" (both Indian and Chinese) as unknowledgeable and regarded themselves as the ones who really had "an idea" or only

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*"bad impressions" because they "had to rely on the media [...] and not the opportunity like me to come here." (Yin).*

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Li claimed that

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*"[...] most people here [in India] are uneducated. So they will be influenced by politicians and powerful people."*

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The neo-liberal notion of *Sino-Indian economic complementarity* was another fundamental concept to explain the bilateral relations. Four participants did directly relate to it, for example Lining:

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*"For the manufacture we are good. [...] But India is better for the software. China needs India. [...] They need each other, not for fighting."*

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Chan concluded:

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*"Of course I want them to be more cooperative with each other. I hope cooperation is not only in economics, but also in culture and politics. It's good for both of us."*

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Those are clear examples for the strong reference to the structural belief in a globalised, neo-liberal world and growing interdependence, a discourse that is very much in line with the agenda promoted on the state-level.

#### **5.1.4 Brief summary**

The majority of the Chinese students described their stay in India as a positive experience. In terms of '*(antithetic) Othering*', positive stereotypes for Indians included friendly, non-materialistic and pacifistic. Despite admiring Indian diversity and mysticism, many also pointed out negative 'Indian' attributes such as being unreliable, chaotic and India in general economically unsuccessful and polluted. The interviewees' *identity* was sometimes challenged by the stay abroad ("I feel half Indian"), but most seemed encouraged by the nature of a more effective/ successful 'Chinese' mentality. Many showed instances of critical reflexivity in relation to mutual clichés and common misconceptions.

There was little or no indication that the experiences in India posed a threat to the students' sense of *Ontological Security*. On the contrary, it seemed to underscore their feeling of the superiority of the Chinese way and its success in economic and even political terms. Many were surprised by the Indian 'obsession' with China and the 1962 war. Only a few credited the advantages of Indian civic and democratic rights.

The perception of the *bilateral relations* was generally optimistic, drawing heavily on an elitist neo-liberal worldview and the notion of economic complementarity. This was strongly contrasted with the negative perception of the 'common Chinese' who was impacted by the negative media coverage. Moreover, a lot of trust was put in the strong leaderships in both nations to overcome the mutual lack of knowledge about each other and to foster stronger cooperation and avoid future border tensions.

## 5.2 Analysis of the Indian students' interviews

The majority of Indian nationals were studying a major in social sciences, most prominent Chinese language and culture. At least six of them did explicitly express their hope that the resulting competences would enable them to find a good job, often with a China-related focus.

### 5.2.1 "Othering" and impact on the individuals' political identity

The overall perception was very positive. Without exception, all ten participants clearly expressed that their time in the PRC was "good" and eight would recommend their fellow nationals to visit China – only two were undetermined because they argued that the Chinese language barrier might be too difficult for some. Only two expressed their willingness to stay longer though, while one was undetermined and seven very clearly stated that they could not imagine themselves living or settling in China for a longer period.

Still, more than half of the Indian interviewees described Chinese citizens as "friendly" (6). Some also found them "humble" (3). Most prominent, however, were *positive attributes* that were more or less related to work attitude: Six argued that Chinese were very "hard-working", "disciplined" (3) and "punctual" (3). General safety was another positive, but highly gendered issue. The five feminine participants all voiced similar things like Nami who stated that

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*"[...] yeah, the safety. That was the biggest one [difference]. I cannot even ever imagine to travel alone in India. But in China I just did that."*

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The strong contrast between India and China is made clear through "not even ever" and "just". Even though the words "rape" or "harassment" were never mentioned in this context, the underlying meaning was obvious.

On the negative side was the impression that Chinese were *racist and discriminated* foreigners and even fellow nationals on the basis of ethnicity – especially skin colour. Nami used ellipses to finally get to the point which put herself in the paradox situation of sounding racist herself, she thus tried to sound more convincing by stressing her claim:

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*"And ... I don't know if that's appropriate to say or not, but they are a little... you know – they discriminate! Maybe it's not an appropriate word, but they discriminate!"*

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Closely related was the notion of seven students that Chinese were "self-centred", little knowledgeable and "ignorant" towards other cultures and nations (except for a number of

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“western, developed” countries) and thus chauvinistic. Sahi described them as “racist” and connected it with a cultural-historical argument:

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*“Chinese mentality is very similar to the name: Zhongguo [chin. ‘China’ or ‘Middle Kingdom’, 中国]. They still have that mentality that ‘We are the centre of everything’. [...]They have this very affinity towards... Americans.”*

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Five students said that China was “obsessed” with the ‘West’

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*“What I didn’t like to be frank, is, they have this perception that ‘West is the best!’”(Prita) .*

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Faheel referred to class at university, where when the teachers give examples

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*“It always starts with the US. Always meiguo [chin. ‘America’ or ‘Land of Beauty’, 美国]! So they are very much after the US. One clear thing is only US is before China. [...] When it comes to India, then they kind of feel a superior complex.”*

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Apparently, some students were insulted by the lack of interest, respect and acknowledgement of achievement from the Chinese nation towards their mother country, which undermined their self-confidence as Indian citizens. Two blamed China with having a “superiority complex”, but their emotional reactions rendered it likely that they themselves suffered from a minority complex.

*Antithetic ‘Othering’* did exist, but only to a limited degree. Five students expressed that Chinese were submissive and judged them as uncritical towards hierarchies and authority, which some of them juxtaposed with Indians who “questioned everything”. Adya saw it as essential that Indians questioned authority, but equally intertwined with Chinese mentality that

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*“...in China it does not happen. You can’t question who is in front of you, questioning any leader or any official is not allowed. And that it’s the identity they are following. That has got somewhere gotten into the brain!”*

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Many interviewees were concerned to sound xenophobic, and tried to counterbalance it by proclaiming that they were not (which resulted in the opposite):

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*“I would not try to be racist over here, but that is something I feel that is very prevalent in Chinese offices. You always have to score high points with the authorities.” (Bevis).*

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Another notion that was already remarked by the Chinese interviewees was that Chinese were very “materialistic”, whereas Indians were more spiritual. Interestingly, Chinese/ Indians were contrasted as “hard-working” (8)/ “lazy” (2), “disciplined” (4)/ “chaotic” (2) and even “homogenous”(2)/ “heterogeneous” (2) by the Indian students, which was very much in line with the Chinese narration and mutual stereotypes therefore unchallenged. Obviously, the majority of negative attributes were even applied to own nationals by the Indians students themselves, who often expressed admiration for the Chinese “discipline”.

Seven interviewees reported tremendous issues with the local food. All ten interviewees made it explicitly clear that there was a *fundamental lack of mutual knowledge and trust*, especially among the “common people”. Many blamed the negative media coverage in both and explicitly the censorship in China. Concerning the “average person” or “common Indian”, five students were rather hesitant to admit that the perception was negative and that most of them viewed China with suspicion or even hostility. When asked about

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*“average’s people perception?[...] If not an enemy at least a competitor, an opponent... strategically.” (Bevis)*

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and Sahi argued that

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*“...some of them view China as enemy only... because of the war or the conflict we had before in 1962.They think that they eat cockroaches and snakes and stuff.”.*

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The students were not sure what to think about the “common Chinese” perception of India, because apparently their personal experience often contradicted with other impressions:

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*“You know I feel that people in China really have little knowledge about India. They usually think about us – you know – enemies. Towards me they were always good.” (Nami).*

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During the interview, the students tried to construct a long tradition of mutual ties by referring to a number of historical commonalities such as being “ancient civilizations” (6), early contacts via Buddhism (4) or Buddhist monks such as Yuan Zang (2) via the silk road (2), similarly collectivist social and family structures (4) and eventually, the bonds of neighbourhood (5). Still, the word “different” was used by six students frequently and in different social and political context, even though not always as extreme as by Nami when she said that

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*“[...] the people are different, their thinking is different, their way of living is different – everything is different!”*

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The Indian scholars had to cope with *discrimination and stereotypes* as well. Four reported that many Chinese were very curious and seven said that many Chinese based their idea of India on Bollywood and believed that Indians can all sing and dance – many cynically suspected that this was the only thing they knew about India. Vaani met Chinese who had told her that India was an example of a “failed democracy” and

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*“Democracy they always say ‘hen luan, hen luan!’ [chin. for “chaotic”, 乱]”*

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Four reported of uncomfortable questions about rape incidents and were often mistaken for nationals of other countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and even African countries.

Concerning *autobiographical identity and political values*, the *a) social location* of the students was similar to their Chinese counterparts: young, educated, privileged and with good chances for a secure career.

Speaking of *b) identification and emotional attachments*, the students had strong positive sense of belonging to the Indian nation. India was often praised as the “world’s largest democracy” and proud references made about the independence struggle, the Indian constitution, religious/ ethnic diversity and democratic values. However, recent personal Sino-Indian comparison posed a clear challenge.

The *c) ethical and political values* were apparently strongly undermined by the shock that many of the interviewees felt when they realized the differences in development and economic success. When asked about the biggest difference between China and India, Sahi exclaimed:

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*“The development! I think India would take another 30 years to reach that, frankly speaking!”*

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Eight students strongly expressed that China was in their opinion a lot more developed than India and people living at a higher living standard. One was indecisive and only one student (Vaani) believed that India was economically more successful “*in the long run*”, even though the Chinese system “*provides quick results*”. Adya for example admitted that

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*“China is known for its propaganda kind of things. The actual data is hidden and the leaders show what they want to. But then I see it’s not only propaganda. [...] But the way India has developed has raised lots of questions- even with the democratic system.”*

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Some, like Faheel, tried to challenge the uncomfortable realization of the development gap with listing achievements of India on a different (social justice) level:

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*“GDP doesn’t say all about a country. Right now there is also GNH [Gross National Happiness], so these things, freedoms, human rights, womens’ empowerment...”*

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Three also made it very clear that *China needed to learn from India* in terms of the treatment of minorities and human rights. Sarendhran said that

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*“China can learn from India in this context, how to behave with national minorities. That’s our strong point.”*

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Despite some of them mocking the Chinese as submissive and uncritical towards the CCP, five expressed their view that *“India needs to learn from China”*. The economic success on the national level was often explained with the diligence of the Chinese people many of them had experienced on a personal level. The second explanation was more complex and went down to the core of the political Indian identity as democratic and anti-authoritarian: Many of the students clearly expressed that China had challenged the advantages of the democratic Indian system with its diversity, controversies and time-consuming compromises. Ledari admitted that Chinese just *“followed blindly”* while Indians *“are going crazy about a single bad thing happening in society”* and concluded cynically:

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*“Hey, possibly that’s the reason why they have achieved doing so much haha. Just doing what they are told haha.”*

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Faheel had to reshape his previous notions about authoritarianism and democracy:

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*“We say there is no democracy, no free speech, but people are happy here, that thing I noticed.”*

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Interestingly, this often resulted in the imagination of an *alternative ‘combined’ political system*, which was meant to be based on democratic human rights but with a stronger, authoritarian leadership that would be more effective and quicker in decision-making in “populous” countries like India and China which were difficult to govern.

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Most of the students were very hesitant to express those thoughts and often used the “relayer” strategy (Cameron 2001, 149) to refer thoughts that were most likely their own to others (‘people’). Ledari for example claimed that

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*“People think that there is a strong leader in power who can handle things better and that’s kind of a good thing actually.”*

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Others, like Sahi, first had the urge to reemphasize their political commitment to the Indian constitution in order to relativize their unease to speak out against the ‘own’ system. Therefore, everything coming previous to ‘but’ was meaningless:

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*“India is democracy- I love that basically, but ...but after seeing, after having... I won’t say autocracy, but the Communist system, they have developed so fast in such a short time.”*

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Nami used a similar strategy, answering the question which system was superior as follows:

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*“What [political system] works better I can not say ... but euh ...see, I am from India, my constitution is democratic and here it is socialist – communist. One party, we have multiple parties.[...] But maybe I think that somewhere the party of China works far better than democracy.”*

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There was a clear fascination with the perceived effectiveness of authoritarianism. However, it did not result in a mere rejection of the Indian system, but only an application of certain traits and a restraint of democratic processes.

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*“I believe that there should be autocracy sometimes, democracy is fine but ...there has to be a bit of autocracy for governing such a big society, as India and China both .... A strong leadership is really necessary.[...] On the other hand, democracy is what India needs. India can’t do without democracy.” (Tejal).*

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To conclude, the participants’ answers showed both an intercultural and more reflexive approach to preconceived stereotypes which often resulted in positive change, but in many cases also a reinforcement of prejudices.

### **5.2.2 Ontological Security and the 1962 ‘chosen drama’**

Ontological Security asserts that the self relies on a dominant, autobiographical narrative. According to Delehanty and Steele (2009, 531) this identity is also crucial for state actors and



consequently the involved collectives and individuals in order to make sense of their behaviour in international relations – any endangerment of this dominant narrative poses as a threat. Surendhran believed that most Indians viewed China extremely negative and explained how his friends suspected him to be a China-obsessed “panda-hugger”:

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*“Most of the Indians would say – they are ‘dragon-hunters’. I’d say rather be a critical ‘panda-hugger’. You know they say they are a dragon and we are an elephant – it’s a state-imposed notion.”*

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His statement gives some hints to China’s and India’s juxtaposed autobiographical selves on the state-level that are useful to explain their ambiguous relations and long-time attachments (Krolikowski 2008, 113f). It has become a common notion to identify both nations with those majestic animals. Still, he makes it clear that he suspects most Indians to view China as an enemy (‘dragon-hunters’) and therefore his liberal attitude and intercultural discourse alienated him from his friends who seemed to follow a pessimist discourse.

This clearly shows the paradox and confusion the competing pessimist/ discourses in society create among many Indians who are from different social locations and political milieus. There was very strong evidence during the interviews suggesting that the 1962 border war might indeed match the definition of a ‘chosen trauma’ (Volkan 1997, 36). All ten students mentioned the conflict during the conversation, often early in the interviews (first or second section) before the questions actually thematised historical relations and events:

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*“The 1962 war ... that was a humiliation for India. [...] Because presently we are still rumbling with those issues.” (Adya)*

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All students who mentioned the conflict made it very clear that it was strongly remembered in India and that it was the one issue that blocked a genuine political approximation. Many of them referred to the Indian “defeat” as a strong “humiliation” and an Indian “obsession” with the conflict, only two rejected that notion. Surendhran believed that

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*“It’s stuck in our mind and we refresh it every year, through media or a new academic book. [...] They love it. ‘They’ is the Indian street, the mainstream. They love the drama.”*

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and Bevis almost gave a schoolbook explanation for a ‘chosen trauma (or: drama)’ when asked about the most important historical events, saying that it was

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*“Of course 1962 war. Indo-Sino war. It’s not much of an issue, but Indians still remember the war –Chinese don’t. I asked a lot of Chinese when I was in China – they did not know![...] I think it has to do with the losing side: The losing side always remembers!”*

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This seems to suggest the danger that, without counter steering, China might transform from a significant ‘Other’ into an ‘enemy-Other’ from the point of view of the biased Indian media and majority of people. It was also interesting to note that five students remarked that there was a very strong aversion in China towards Japan. Bevis drew a clear parallel between the 1937 Nanjing massacre and the 1962 war:

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*“That’s why the Chinese government keeps remembering the Nanjing massacre. They call it the 100 years of shame.”*

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And Vaani assessed that

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*“There is an anti-Japanese feeling there in China, which I think stems from nationalism.”*

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The limited insight from these interviews seems to indicate that 1962 is remembered as a strong ‘chosen’ drama on the Indian side and that the students’ Ontological Security in relation to an identification with democratic India was threatened by the economically and militarily more successful authoritarian ‘Other’.

### **5.2.3 Discourse on bilateral relations**

The general assessment of the contemporary and future Sino-Indian ties was very optimistic. Nine out of ten interviewees eventually voiced their belief in a steady improvement of the partnership on various levels, especially economics and the political level. Many argued similar to Tejal:

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*“I think the cooperation will be better. Both need each other for the next 30 years. Trade relations will increase [...] and there will be a solution to the border problem.”*

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However, many expressed similar apprehensions as Bevis who stated that the current relations

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*“... [are] growing politically, I mean political exchanges are growing, economic exchanges are growing, businesses are flourishing in both countries. [...] I think that’s pretty much it – it has not culminated to the cultural and people-to-people level yet.”*

Consequently, at least six students argued that more cultural and social exchanges would be necessary, four of them planning to get engaged in this area themselves. Faheel is representative saying that

*“We have to increase friendship, trust. Trust is very important!”*

Three, however, also said that there would be growing competition between the two national economies, which was not seen as a disadvantage though, but a chance for further growth. Eight students argued that China and India were already “interdependent” and that a closer Sino-Indian cooperation would bring further mutual benefits. Even though seven believed that nationalism was on the rise in India and six that it was strong in the PRC, six argued that it would not cause tensions in the bilateral relations in the future. One student penetrated the purposefully juxtaposed question whether or not nationalism would lead to future conflicts and rejected it - as many others did - with the liberal belief in the rational behaviour of both governments:

*“That’s a very bookish question! Haha! A bookish question haha.[...]I believe that both countries have rational governments which take rational decisions on the policy front.”*

Five students were explicitly optimistic about the “strong” Xi Jinping and Narendra Modi administrations and their cooperation, expressing their hope that they could eventually solve the border issue, which was regarded by eight students as the first fundamental issue standing in the way of warming relations. The second barrier were the contradicting alliances between the PRC/ Pakistan and India/US:

*“And in IR, China is using Pakistan against India, likewise India is using Tibet against China... and there is the US also! Which is manipulating both.” (Surendhran)*

Generally, the overwhelming number of the Indian students strongly referred to elements that are an elementary part of the political and economic neo-liberal discourse which is mainly propagated by the elites in both countries: Economic complementarity, deepening interdependence, rational decision-making of state actors, mutual economic benefits both

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through cooperative and competitive elements and the strong belief in the partnership which would lead to non-conflictual solutions to political issues.

This was often based on the personal experience of making “first-hand experience”, seeing “with one’s own eyes” and with the gained knowledge a self-perceived rise on the social power axis, which gave the students (‘Us’, the “educated”) the self-confidence to discredit the pessimistic discourse of the unknowledgeable “uneducated people” (‘Them’):

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*“Euh ... the people who are not educated, they still consider China as a threat and because of the war that we had with China. But the people who are educated they know the value of China and the importance of Indio-China friendship... and people like us who have learned Chinese, we know China is not a threat, it’s rather a friendly nation, a reliable one.” (Tejal).*

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Consequently, this discourse strongly rejected a conflictual discourse and drew on a more ‘feminine’ one which stressed cooperation, peace, mutual respect, trust and Sino-Indian friendship (Ruddick 2001, 196).

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*“I think both governments should encourage more students to study in the other country. [...] It’s the best way to understand a particular society. Students come back and they propagate what they have seen in a particular country – that’s the best way to break all the myths and stereotypes that have been created!” (Tejal).*

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Finally, the rhetoric was supplemented with a very strong emphasis on the need for further cultural and social exchanges, cooperation and education programmes.

#### **5.2.4 Short summary**

All Indian students evaluated their stay in China and the related experiences as positive<sup>37</sup>. They were apparently intrigued by the ‘Chinese’ discipline and diligence, attributes they contrasted with the Indian *identity* through a strong juxtaposed discourse of ‘*antithetic Othering*’. However, Indians were very aware of occasional incidents of racist discrimination and sometimes felt that Chinese looked down at them with a sense of superiority.

The experienced gap in developmental terms clearly posed a strong challenge to the Indian autobiographical narrative of ‘Indian democracy’ and the related *Ontological Security*. Many

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<sup>37</sup> It became clear that most of the individuals had chosen to go abroad for career purposes, but a striking difference was that most of the Chinese students were pursuing an economy-related major in natural science and most of the Indians a subject in social sciences, mostly on Chinese linguistics and culture.

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were shocked to admit the advantage of the authoritarian political system and materialistic Chinese mentality. Still, many insisted that China too could learn from the Indian model in the area of human rights and civil liberties.

The Indian students viewed the future *Sino-Indian relations* similarly optimistic as their Chinese counterparts, stressing the growing economic interdependence and political consultations. Based on their upper social location, the majority showed strong abilities to critically reflect upon common stereotypes, often despising them. Even though many argued that the border issue was a major obstacle that would soon be solved, they were very consistent in their appeal for more people-to-people exchanges and cultural cooperation to build bilateral trust.

### **5.3 Summary of the findings**

Firstly, it is important to note that the *intercultural* interviewees in this thesis revealed tendencies for “*an on-going critically reflexive process (...) necessary for interacting with people from diverse cultural backgrounds*” (Walton et al 2013). However, those ‘intercultural’ competences of the Chinese and Indian exchange students did not hinder them to apply both negative and positive stereotyping based on similar binaries and ‘Othering’ either, often reaffirming preconceived stereotypes of the two national characters involved (Coleman 1998). Therefore, this study has a mixed outcome in relation to the debate on the intercultural experiences of students. Nevertheless, it appears as if the reduction of negative stereotypes was more prevalent than its reinforcement and the evaluation of the experience abroad generally positive.

Still, ‘*antithetic Othering*’ in particular (e.g. hard-working/ lazy; materialistic/ spiritual; homogenous/ diverse; disciplined/ chaotic) which worked on a binary basis (Ogilvie and Ashmore 1991; Coleman 2013) and allowed the construction of the own national self through the differentiation of the ‘Other’ on the basis of “identity markers” (Rumelili 2015) was actively and often used. Moreover, it was conspicuous that the larger part of these stereotypes about each other were largely unchallenged by both sides, openly accepted and often rhetorically naturalised.

Surprisingly, the majority of these attributes seemed generally in favour of the Chinese ‘identity’, something interviewees on both sides reproduced. In combination with the

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overwhelming perception of India's economic performance as weak in comparison to the PRC, it led to a clear social hierarchy and political power imbalance which expressed itself in a respective discourse where personal notions of national identities were transferred to the economic level in order to explain the development gap.

This meant that the intercultural encounter and inevitable comparison was a strong blow to the feeling of Indian *Ontological Security* in relation to "Indian democracy", Indian *identity* and the *state's autobiographical narrative* in the anarchical and chaotic sphere of international relations (Delehanty and Steele 2009).

On the one hand, the Chinese students seemed to be reassured by the (unsuccessful) "Indian (economic) experience", applied a rhetoric that reassured their trust into the Chinese authoritarian system and discursively reproduced China as the superior brother who would gladly educate the disobedient sibling if he would only listen. This created a discourse often being on the verge of chauvinism.

The Indian students' socio-political identity on the other hand was deeply challenged and led many to cast doubt on the domestic democratic system which had caused the apparently huge difference in development. This meant that they often preferred a more Realist and even pessimist discourse than their Chinese counterparts. Still, a number of Indian students and few Chinese stressed India's head start in the field of rule of law and political freedom. There was even the shared fantasy of a political hybrid model that would combine both the Chinese strong leadership and Indian social rights in an optimal system.

Especially Volkan (1997) and Callahan (2004) have argued that one way to cope with the pressure to regain Ontological Security is national humiliation, serving as boundary marker between the 'Self' and the 'Other'. Consequently, the Indian interviewees voiced how important the 1962 war was in the contemporary collective memory of India as a humiliating '*chosen trauma*'. They also argued that many Indians increasingly saw China as an important 'Other' (and potential future enemy-'Other') and that they were often surprised by the lack of equivalent perceptions on the Chinese side. The Chinese students' discourse seemed to confirm that, suggesting that the majority of the Chinese was not looking at India as its equal but as an inferior international player (having lost the single violent confrontation in 1962) who lagged behind and that China's citizens were much more fixed on Japan and the US as opponents. Moreover, students of both nations argued that the ill-fated territorial issue led to a largely native perception and lack of mutual trust in both countries.

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## 6. CONCLUSION

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The outset for this thesis was the question to what degree Chinese and Indian students abroad conform with the dominant discursive formation of the contemporary Sino-Indian bilateral relations or differ from it in order to make sense of their intercultural experiences.

The fourth chapter as critical review of the history of and the academic study on the discursive formation in both nations of the postcolonial bilateral relations shows that it is dominated by two opposing bilateral discourses, namely Liberalism and Realism, which is also reflected in the contemporary academic cleavage (Goh 2006; Holslag 2010). The analysis of the interviews suggests that the *overall discourse* of the interviewed students on the *bilateral* relations operated within the dominant discursive formation. Their rhetoric appeared to be very positive, idealistic and associated with neo-Liberalism, despite the occurrence of mutual and partially even chauvinistic stereotyping.

The students largely distanced themselves from any hostile notions from the Realist camp which they assigned to the populist media and the ignorance of the ‘uneducated’, ‘common’ man and woman. While Catarina Kinnvall (2004) has argued that different groups often compete for credibility via diverging discourses, Delehanty and Steele (2009) believe that such a discourse can also be related to the dominant discourse promoted by the state.

Accordingly, the majority of students from both nations constructed a highly elitist discourse on the Sino-Indian mutual relations which largely followed the neo-Liberal narrative of economic complementarity and improving cooperation. However, it was striking how strong both interview groups supplemented this largely economic discourse with a more ‘feminine’ and idealistic plea for intensified cultural exchange, people-to-people contact, stronger learning from and about each other (Ruddick 2001) and restraint of the biased media - all means they regarded as crucial in order to dramatically improve the bilateral ties. The students frequently justified their own, somewhat alternative opinions with their different educational background and first-hand experience about the ‘real’ China/ India. The awareness of a lack of trust between the two nations was one of the most frequently reoccurring concepts which the students viewed with great concern. Consequently, many of them voiced the intention to personally contribute to its improvement throughout their careers as intermediators of Sino-Indian relations. This means that even though their overall



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discourse was related to and not in opposition to the ‘masculine’ state-level discourse, it is unique in its emphasis of ‘feminine’ traits (Delehanty and Steele 2009; Ruddick 2001).

While the number of exchange students between China and India is limited, their numbers are growing. This small study suggests that their intercultural experiences and voices stand in stark contrast to the negative discourse by the public, replacing the notion of inexorable conflict with one of peace, cooperation and trust. It might be suggested that cultural exchange and contact between the two nations decreases the potential for escalation and ‘Othering’ by - to quote Kipling - “*looking on We as only a sort of They!*”

Future in-depth research on the discourse of intercultural students of conflict –burdened nations like China/ India, Pakistan/ India, Israel/ Palestine or China/ Japan might carry rich and insightful data and maybe even the potential to find conflict-reducing means inspired by the fresh perspective of an intercultural youth.

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## 8. APPENDIX

### 8.1 Interview overview

Chinese Participant No.	Name <sup>38</sup>	Gender	Age	Stay in India	University	Major
1	Yuran	f	23	4,5 years	Mumbai University	B.A. in Mass Media
2	Ruoyun	m	24	4 years	Mumbai University	M.A. Business and Commerce
3	Lining	f	22	4 years	Mumbai University	B.A. Business Management
4	Bailong	m	23	4,5 years	Mumbai University	B.A. Computer Science
5	Yazhen	m	28	4 years	Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU)	M.A., PhD Musicology
6	Xiaoyu	f	32	2 years	JNU	PhD Sino-Indian relations
7	Yong	m	29	2 years	JNU	M.A. IR
8	Yin	f	27	1,5 years	JNU	M.A. Economics
9	Li	m	23	4 years	Delhi University (DU)	B.A. Philosophy
10	Chan	m	23	4 years	DU	B.A. Commerce

Indian participant	Name <sup>39</sup>	Gender	Age	University China	Majors India
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<sup>38</sup> The Interviewees' names have been altered for the sake of confidentiality.

<sup>39</sup> Names have been altered for the sake of confidentiality.

Fel! Formatmallen är inte definierad.

No.						
1	Surendhran	m	29	Tianjin University, 2 months	MPhil	Political Science
2	Adya	f	26	Shenyang Normal University, 11 months Mandarin	MPhil	Chinese Studies
3	Bevis	m	26	Shanghai University, 1 year Mandarin	M.A.	Chinese language and literature
4	Vaani	f	25	Harbin University, 1 year Mandarin	M.A.	Mandarin
5	Prita	f	26	Hangzhou Normal University, 11 months Mandarin	MPhil	Chinese Studies
6	Ledari	m	26	Shanghai University, 8 months	M.A.	International Management
7	Tejal	m	22	Beijing Language and Culture University (BLCU). 7 months Mandarin	B.A.	Mandarin
8	Faheel	m	25	BLCU, 8 months Mandarin	M.A.	Chinese Studies
9	Sahi	f	22	BLCU, Mandarin 8 months	B.A.	Mandarin
10	Nami	f	21	BLCU, 8 months Mandarin	B.A.	Mandarin

## 8.2 Interview questionnaire

### 1st part: The pre-conceptions and ideas

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How did you come to study in India/ China? How did you find out about the possibility?

Was it originally your own idea or did someone suggest it to you (friend, supervisor family)?

What were the PRO's (advantages, 好处) and CON's (disadvantages, 坏处) you had in mind before going to your host country?

Before your departure, how did you expect the people to be like?

What did your family/ friends say about your host country when you told them about your plans?

### 2<sup>nd</sup> part: First impressions and arrival

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Have you been very excited when you arrived in your host country? *Why (not)?*

How did you feel during your first days in your host country?

What did you like most and what did you dislike?

Do you remember any event or thing that surprised you? Amazed you? Shocked you?

Did you have difficulties with the food, the culture, the language, the people?

What was the biggest difference in comparison to home?

How did people react when they found out from which country you are originally? *Did you feel to be treated rather well or impolite?*

Did anyone ask or wanted to talk about your home country? *Was what was said appropriate or wrong?*

### 3<sup>rd</sup> part: Present and coming to terms

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Having stayed a while in your host country now, is it a good or bad experience?

Have you learned more about China/ India? *What?*

Has your understanding of your host country changed? How in comparison to before? Better or worse?

Are you now (more) interested in the culture and politics of the country? *If yes, what are you interested in? Is it different from home?*

How do the people in your home country think about your host country?

Do you think that your opinion (立场) similar to most of your nationals when you come home? *If not, how is it different?*

Can you recommend visiting your host country? *Why?*

Could you imagine yourself living in your host country in the future for a longer period?

#### 4<sup>th</sup> Part: Chinese-Indian comparison: Identity, politics and future relations

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Do you think that there is a unique “Indian” identity or mentality (别致的文化认同 / 身份 / 思想状态)?

Do you think that there is a unique “Chinese” identity or mentality?

What is the biggest difference in the mentality of Indians and Chinese?

What role plays religion (信教, xinjiao) in your life? Did it change in your host country?

Do you think that the members of your nation have things in common (共性) in relation to the past (往事), culture, their contemporary role in Asia (当今地位在亚洲 / 世界)

It is often said that China and India have very different political systems (政治制度). What are the differences between India and China and which works better?

What are the differences in relation to the economic system, GDP growth and poverty reduction (贫困减少)? Which nation performs better?

What are the most important historical events between China and India?

Has your country ever been humiliated (受辱) by or triumphed (得胜) over your host country?

How is the current relationship between China and India?

What do you think about nationalism (汉民族主义 / 印度教徒民族主义) in your own country?

Have you experienced any incidents of political radicalism (政治极端主义) or nationalism in your host country?

According to many experts, nationalism is on the rise in both nations: Do you see potential for future conflict (冲突) because of this? *And most people on your country?*

Do you think the average people of both countries see each other as friends or enemies (敌人)? *Yourself?*

How do you, having lived in both countries, predict the nature of future relations? Will they rather be allies, foes, competitors or none of those to each other?

#### 5<sup>th</sup> part: Ending

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Did I forget to ask anything important? Do you want to say anything else?

Please feel free to contact me by phone or email should you have any other upcoming thought after the interview.