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One belt one road and Indian response

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Abstract

Historically, the Silk Route was the First inter-continental route and played a role at international level. Time to time revival of the route and different perspectives emerged to fulfill the needs in economy, culture and politics. In our time again the revival of the Silk Route is coming in the form of One Belt One Road from Chinese perspective and Free and Open Indo-Pacific and International North-South Transport Corridor as Indian response. The Indo-Pacific region is emerging like the Great Game, world powers are using it to establish their supremacy. In the 21st century, India is growing as a power not only in Asia but also in Global politics. We have enough resources to establish our supremacy in the Indo-Pacific Region as the Indian government has good foreign relations. The Second Quad Summit saw more concerted efforts in this direction. Simultaneously India's initiative as International North-South transport corridor and bilateral agreements with Iran to begin Chabahar Port is of high degree response to Chinese OBOR strategy.

Keywords: Silk route revival, geo-economics, quad, indo-pacific, maritime security, cpec, act east policy, international north –south transport corridor, chabahar port

Introduction

India is taking seriously to the One Belt and One Road (OBOR) development strategy of China for connecting and cooperation between Asia-Pacific and European countries. It is one type of new form of the Silk Route in the 21st century. This is a regional economic cooperation strategy proposed by Chinese president, Xi Jinping when delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in 2013. Growth of China in the Asia-Pacific region is a serious problem to India's Security. China has justified that its presence is to secure its economic and commercial interests, but the projection of power by China in the Asia-Pacific region represents something else. India, US, Japan and Australia joined together to create a substitute of One Belt and One Road creating the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". Thus, the initiative is renamed as "Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy". In this era of globalization economy holds the key in any bilateral, trilateral and multilateral cooperation. Therefore India is seeking its own economic interests in this whole development.

India is against Chinese President Xi Jinping's ambitious project because OBOR initiative includes violation of Indian sovereign claims. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rejected the One Belt One Road policy of China at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit in Qingdao with these words "India welcomes any such project which is inclusive, sustainable and transparent and which respects member states' sovereignty and territorial integrity"^[1].

Earlier, India and China have decided to launch a bold political initiative to break the impasse over the boundary dispute. Bilateral relations improved further during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to China in June 2003. The two nations entered an important agreement signed between China's Commerce Minister, Lu Fuyuan and India's External Affairs Minister, Yashwant Sinha. Which seeks to ease border trade. According to the document's preamble both nations have agreed to the "opening of Nathula Pass in the Sikkim State on the India-China border" for trade. This trade route through Sikkim's Nathula Pass is the shortest distance between India and China. It is an all-weather pass situated at a height of 14,500 ft. It was closed after the Sino-Indian conflict in 1962. The re-opening of this pass suggests a revival of Ancient Silk Route over which the framed Chinese fabric was

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¹ Firstpost.com, 03 June 2017 10:06:51 by NR Mohanty.

traditionally brought to India, to be traded for goods from the subcontinent. From Nathula, Lhasa, the capital of Tibet is 416 km away, Yatung the Tibetan trading station is 21 km and the Chumbitang settlement is only 9 km down the road into the Chumbi Valley, surrounded by the great peaks of Paunhuri and Chomolhar. This trans-frontier economic cooperation has restored historic trading routes, access roads and pilgrimage rights, and created a new framework.

India's Response and Opening of the International North – South Transport Corridor: The First Russian Deputy Minister of Railways, Aleksandra Misharin declared that Russia would have an International North-South Transport Corridor to India via Iran ^[2]. He said that Iran is now building a railway spur to one of its Caspian ports. When it is ready, Russian trains will be ferried from Astrakhan to the Chabahar Port of Iran, whence they will proceed to India. This transport corridor is not only in Russia's interest but a hard response of India against the OBOR Project of the Chinese Government. This corridor is a combination of roadways, waterways, railways and airways for promoting transportation cooperation among the state members, Russia, Iran and India. The corridor will connect the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. It has potential to encounter the policy of OBOR of China as it provides geo-strategic and economic development to all the involved countries. This is an intergovernmental and intercontinental multimodal project covering 7,200 km. Keeping in mind, Indian leaders are using a proactive approach towards INSTC. India is opening alternative linkages to the Chinese BRI project and invested in Chabahar Port in Iran in this direction. Chabahar port is emerging as a major transshipment hub for Cargos.

Indian Security in Indo-Pacific Region: Throughout history, Indo-Pacific has been an important space in launching and modeling regional dynamics and larger security framework. The great power tussle is no different in the present scenario. The Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is a platform for economic negotiations among thirteen members but the major objective of IPEF is to provide a security oriented platform like Quad to counter China's aggressive position in the area. As the US, Australia, Japan and India recently organized; the dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region have changed. The Indo-Pacific region is bringing together many countries and represents the new strategic realities for India of the twenty first century.

Recently, it is believed that the Indo-Pacific has not set strategy to cover China; the containment concept has basically been derived by China's rise and destructive development ^[3]. Facing tough relations with Pakistan and China, India needs to focus on the Indo-Pacific region from a continental perspective. At the first summit of Indo-Pacific Business, External Affairs Minister Jai Shankar symbolizes a phrase "Return to History" in terms of Indian maritime trade ^[4]. Keeping in mind the security and wellbeing of the Indo-Pacific region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi

indicated these objectives when he designed India's Indo-Pacific vision as "SAGAR" ^[5].

Economic Needs of India and Indo-Pacific Region: In the 21st Century, India and China have been the fastest growing economies of Asia. In this direction, India's development reflects positive trends. India opposes China's OBOR policy and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Indian diplomacy in the last few years has been to counter China and its influence. China is a competitor of India in Africa, West Asia, Central Asia and the Indo-Pacific. In current circumstances, India is setting an action plan aimed toward protecting its sovereign interests.

India possesses a large, well-rounded industrial and scientific-technical base, and an agricultural sector which has shown an impressive capacity for development. But despite its enormous potential, India is not yet able to role as a prime locomotive for Eurasian advancement, China does presently. Recently there have been signs of growing interest in India about its Eurasian Land-Bridge development as a potential means for addressing both external and internal problems of the country. Positive development in multifaceted dealings between India, Russia, China, Iran and other countries of the region, reflect a rising positioning toward mutually beneficial economic cooperation, in which the Land-Bridge is a central element.⁶ The Rapidly expanding economy of India, combined with its near total dependence on energy imports makes India a potential customer of Central Asian Caspian oil and gas. And India is concerned in developing export markets in Central Asia for both its cheap consumer goods and its high-tech products ^[7]. India's incorporation into the Eurasian Land-bridge system would mean a massive gain for the economy of Eurasia as a whole.

Establishment of Indian Supremacy: India: A Civilization footprint through history from Mediterranean to the Pacific, from the Indian Ocean littoral to Central Asia. In 21st century, economically, politically culturally India is emerging power of the world. During Man Mohan Singh Government, there was a slogan "Chindia" to make harmonious relations between India and China but China never respected the sentiments of India. Therefore, this is the time to create the supremacy of India not only in Indo-Pacific region but in the whole world. Indian foreign policy should be based on multi-alignment and multi-engagement in an increasingly multipolar world.

Findings and Conclusions: To counter China's OBOR project, India must improve relations with small countries like Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh etc. Simultaneously, we need to make strong contacts with Great powers like the US and Japan, which can help us to break the speed of expansion of China in the Indo-Pacific region. India needs to invest soft and hard

² BBC "SWB SUB/0677 WA/16, 09 Feb 2001

³ Rory Medcalf, "Indo-Pacific Vision: Giving Solidarity a Chance", Asia Policy 14, no.3, 2019.

⁴ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhary, "Indo-Pacific Reflects Benefits of Rebalancing: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, The Economic Times, 06 July 2021

⁵ India's Indo-Pacific Strategy was enunciated by PM Modi during the Shangri-la Dialogue in 2018 as the SAGAR, Doctrine in Singapore, 01 June 2018.

⁶ R. Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann H. Simonian, *Troubled Waters the Geopolitics of the Caspian Region*, (London, New York: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001), p. 121

⁷ Vijay Kapur, 'A Afghanistan And Central Asia: Differentiated Challenges and Priorities in the Twenty First Century' in K. Warikoo (ed), *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, vol. 8 Nos. 2-3, April-Sept. 2004, (New Delhi), p. 12.

power in the region. Coal industry of India, which has the fifth biggest position in the world, can fulfill energy needs of many countries of the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian government should start projects in this direction. We need to make a power balance in the area so there could not be another Ukraine in the world. Trust, transparency and timeliness are the basis of cooperation among IPEF Nations, and these three pillars will lead to development, peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. To make treaties with Russia and Iran and opening of Chabahar port on the International North –south Transport Corridor is also a good response of India to Chinese expansion through OBOR and CPEC.

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