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India and Her Neighbours: A Special Focus on China

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Abstract

Chinese activity in India and her neighbouring countries is very crucial for India, recently China is creating strategic tension in India. China has not only used Pakistan, but has also used other South-Asian countries. While India is moving towards the US, China is creating pressure on India directly and indirectly through her neighbours. In pursuit of such policy, China has successfully established its military presence in almost in all countries neighboring India on all four directions. India and China while cooperating in a variety of multilateral processes ranging from trade negotiation to discussion on climate change are increasingly competing with each other in global race for wealth, energy and influence as emerging powers. The two sides are still struggling inside the mesh of classic security dilemma where any action taken by one side is immediately interpreted by the other as a threat to its own interest. In this context, this paper aims to discuss the security of India vis-à-vis China.

Keywords: Strategic tension, emerging power, Security dilemma

1. Introduction

The contemporary world order has unprecedented stress and strain. The bipolar international system that evolved after the end of the World War II and remained intact for about four decades, collapsed in to wake of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the 1990's. The contemporary world order has entered a phase of such rapid transformations about which no one had any idea two decades before. One of the most spectacular developments of last two decades in world politics and international economic scenario has been the miraculous growth and development of the Chinese economy, tremendous expansions of its military and naval capability and unprecedented spread and reach of its diplomatic networks around the globe. The second most significant happening in world affairs in general and in Asian strategic landscape in particular is India's rapid growth of economic, nuclear status and diplomatic networks around the globe. China and India are emerging as pivotal components in the evolving balance of power in Asia. There is no doubt that they are rising rapidly in the 21st Century. Today, without China no one can discuss anything related to the fast changing Global politics. Its importance in recent decades can be traced not only to its Military potential but also economic strength gained by making others depended on its cheap labour but also efficient manufacturing processes¹. Now, the whole world is talking about India and China. The reason is very simple: the combined population of the two countries makes up almost 40 percent of humanity, the two economies are among the largest in the world, and both are rising. India, like China has a distinct civilizational identity, composed of a number of cultural patterns, social structures and special view of history. These factors enable it to mobilize its own people around a unique set of values, images and ideas. These include the idea that India is a source of profound ideas and values, that India (and Indians) has something to teach to the rest of the world, and that the major civilization uniquely unassertive towards others. India also has a distinctive way of organizing society, which incredibly influences outlook of the rest of the world and the way others see it². It is not an overstatement to say that the development of the two nations and the relations between the two countries will have a far-reaching influence on the future of the world in the coming decades. India and China are Asia's two giants, both are proud of their ancient civilizations and both represent the top two populations in the world. They possess large territories with

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enormous natural resources, world's fastest economy growth rate, world's third (China) and fourth (India) military power, a large number of educated and talented scientific man power. Together they provide the largest contiguous market in the world. These are the major indicators of the real rise of global power of the future. Today the world is more complex and every country takes cautious strategic steps by carefully weighing the losses and gains and view of its national interest. In this paper, the researcher has tried to show Chinese behavior in this region arise a critical security dilemma which is a threat to India security. The aim of this paper is to discuss the security of India vis-a-vis China.

India and Her Neighbours: A brief Outline

There is no debate among analysts of International politics about the fact that a country's clout in International politics depends among other factors on its relations with the neighbours. This is especially true in the case of a country like India, which is on the verges of emerging as a major power in the world with having a modest economic growth rate. India has therefore been making efforts towards improving her ties with neighbours, because of the recent Chinese activity in South Asian region. Unfortunately, India has no consistent policy towards her neighbours except Gujral Doctrine in few years. Surprisingly though it may appear, which India shares a lot of things in common with South Asian states that include geography, culture, history, society and economy, these commonalities, instead of acting as facilitating factors in closer ties, have in fact, acted as structural constraints on New Delhi's relations with them. The Indian Neighbours consist of nine core populations (including India) and cover an area of more 10% of the Asian continent or 2.7% of the World's total land surface. It accounts for about 34% of Asia's population or over 16.5% of the Global population. Its GDP based on purchasing power parity is \$ 3.57 trillion, with a registered share average growth of over 7% in 2010; with a consumer pedestal of over 425 million in the middle class bracket and 423 billion labour forces- the largest among other economic blocks the world³.

To begin with South Asia as a complex region. The countries in this region have common legacies and historical links. At the same time, there is much diversity in this region like religious, linguistic, political fabric. South Asia has been a theatre of bloody interstate as well as civil wars; it has witnessed liberations movements, nuclear rivalry, military dictatorships and this region suffer from insurgencies, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, besides serious problems associated with drugs and human trafficking.

On the other hand South Asia has an unbalanced and asymmetric power structure, because India's stands in this region is as a dominant or hegemonic structure. In terms of size, economy, populations, military strength, political stability India is far superior to any of its neighbours. The disparity in power between India and Her Neighbours certainly generate understandable apprehensions in the latter that India wants to behave as a big brother or a policeman in the region⁴. At times, some of the neighbours consider to fit to policy the so-called 'China Card' in a hope to derive concessions from India⁵.

China's Role in India and Her Neighbours

The best way to discuss the present nature of Sino-India relations is to observe China's behavior with neighbours. China is not located in South-Asia but China has skillfully used South-Asian countries to dominate India. Recently China has not only used Pakistan, but has also used other South-Asian Countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Srilanka. While India is moving close to US, China is creating pressure on India directly and indirectly through India's neighbours. In pursuit of such policy, China has successfully established its Military presence in almost all countries neighbouring India and from all four directions. After 1962 Sino-Indian border war, China and Pakistan were drawn to each other on the theory: 'enemy's enemy is a friend' replacing the 'Hindi-Chini-Bhai-Bhai' idea. Thus Pakistan is a major factor in Sino-Indian relation. China and Pakistan maintain an'all weather friendship'. It is a well-known fact that for China, Pakistan has been a useful second front against India. Under the boundary agreement between them, Pakistan had ceded to China the occupied territory of the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir and they jointly constructed the Karakoram highway which serves to strengthen their hold over the occupied territories. Moreover, as Garver mentions 'A product Chinese policy would sustain Pakistan against India..... To sacrifice Pakistan would be tantamount to conceding South-Asia as India's sphere of influence'⁶. Whether this observation is tenable in the contemporary changing world is a matter of further debate but it is for sure that a time-tested entente creates its own rationale for perpetuating the existing arrangements⁷. Chinese vice Minister foreign Affairs Wang Yi while referring to Pakistan said that it is the Chinese tradition to value an old friend. Still, Sino-Indian relations have definitely progressed leading to the impression in some quarters that further development '....would gradually diminish the acuity and salience of Sino-Pakistan links⁸. China has acquired control of Gwadar Port in Baluchistan. This geo-strategic presence in North Arabian Sea gives China not only easy access to North Arabian Sea but also through it to Persian Gulf. After Earth Quake of 8 Oct, 2005, 11000 People's Liberation Army (PLA) was used for reconstruction of road and other developmental work in PoK. There have been numerous reports suggesting China's open support to Pakistan's nuclear programme, indicating threat for India. China is helping Pakistan by supplying huge number of nuclear material and technology. In 1998, when India had successfully tested Pokhran-II, Pakistan could not counter it. By all accounts, Pakistan could not emerge as a nuclear power till date.

China is investing in construction of the 165 km- long Jaglot- Skardu road and 135 km- long Thakot-Sazin road in POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). China has also expanded the network of lateral as also feeder roads and bridges in the strategic peripheral valleys of Gilgit – Baltistan, converting pony tracks to jeepable roads along the Line of Control (LoC), thus helping Pakistan to strengthen its military bases near LoC and enhancing the ability to launch swift operations into Ladakh and Kashmir valley. According to Monika Chansoria of Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), there as many as 767 development projects funded by China in the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which included construction of dams, bridges, and roads (including the construction,

maintenance and expansion of the Karakoram Highway)⁹. In October 2013, China made operational a vital road link to Medong Country (hitherto the only country which was not connected) in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), located close to the Indian border at Arunachal Pradesh. China while declaring the road open alluded to Medong Country in Nyingchi prefecture in TAR as the “last isolated country”.

China is increasing presence in Nepal by building rail link to Kathmandu that could easily be used in case there occurs any conflict with India. With Maoist takeover of power in Nepal this possibility has turned into a real threat. Maoist corridor created by their presence in some states of India like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka strengthens Chinese influence through Maoist movement posing internal security threat. Chinese plan to surround India, what American scholar have called ‘A String of Pearls’ that China is creating around the neck of India can be used to strangulate India at it wills. Necklace of pearls become complete when we add Chinese presence in the east and south. In the east Chinese has naval facilities in Bangladesh at Chittagong Port and navel facility surveillance in Coco Islands in Myanmar. Chinese has taken initiative to develop Gwadar port in Pakistan that would enable Beijing to counter any Indian naval hegemony in the Bay. Both Gwadar and Coco provide excellent posts for monitoring India’s naval movement along the Maritimes arc. China also has control over Myanmar port of Sittwe. The port of Sitwee in Myanmar is another area of Chinese interest. The Chinese have offered to build a deep sea-port in Sonadia Island in Bangladesh at a cost of \$ 5 Billion. The two other projects China has proposed include the construction of Bangladesh-Myanmar road corridor (a part of the Asian highway). In Sri-Lanka, China has developed Hambantota port-- a navel facility within a striking distance of India. A major mistake was made by the Indian policy makers when the Hambantota port of Sri Lanka, an important hub in the Indian Ocean, was first offered for development to India, but unfortunately, India’s ignorance of strategic thinking gave china a new space to develop better linkages in the South Asian Region. Recently China is negotiating with Maldives government for a northern most Island to develop a naval base, which is close to India & Sri-Lanka. In, 2013 President Xijiping’s Chinese silk rout policy ‘OBOR’ (One Belt One Road) initiative is very crucial for india’s security threat¹⁰. The initial focus has been infrastructure investment, education, constructions materials, railway and highway, automobile, real estate, power grid and iron and steel. It is a largest infrastructure and investment project in history, covering more than 68 countries, including 65% of the world population and 40% of global gross domestic products as on 2017. Basically, this policy pushes for Chinese dominance in global affairs with a China-Centered trading network.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above discussion, the present researcher has three recommendations in conclusion. **First**, India should develop more and more friendly relations with her neighbours. India will need to optimize all elements of national power and maximize its use of soft power or smart power, to include diplomatic, economic, military, informational, cultural and political options. It needs to

review the “India and Her Neighbours Policy” to make it more dynamic and purposeful. India needs to “Bind to Balance”. In order to create mutual confidence and trust in her neighbours, India should give more attention to frequent interaction at all levels, track-I, track-II, track-III diplomacy and more open dialogues on regional and global issues. While dealing with the demands of neighbours, India should show a big heart. India must use its soft power as an instrument, mainly in the education, cultural, religious and technical spheres in order to generate confidence that it is not at all a hegemonic power in the region, but responsible power like ‘Bhisma’ in Mahabharata. It is noted that India’s emergence as a regional power and as a key global power depends largely on her image and standing in the South Asian neighbourhood.

Secondly, Balance of power strategy with China; it is true that recently China has improved her relations with South Asia neighbours and is encircling India strategically. India has also taken simultaneously to counter China. To counter Chinese strategy India has not only maintained good relations with her neighbours but has also extended good relations with the countries of Africa, West Asia Japan, South Korea, South East Asian Nations, EU countries and parallelly has maintained more and more close ties with USA. As per India’s internal security; In addition to the defence needs, the road-rail-air infrastructure once created will give the much- needed impetus to development of our remote border region and contribute to education, health, tourism, and economic benefits accruing to the people our border region. In the 21st century, close relations between India and USA has created strategic tensions in China and this influenced South Asian region. It is apparent that US and India is determined to contain China’s rise not only in Asia but also in International politics. Basically, this is USA’s balance game strategy to constrain China’s rapid rising power indirectly through India. The policy maker New Delhi should continue with this policy as a long term strategy to balancing China not only in South Asian region, but also in the regions of the World where China has its presence.

Lastly, India and China cannot be friends in the old sense of the term, nor need they be enemies in the old sense of the term. In the contemporary world, everybody is everybody else’s ‘strategic partner’. India is U.S strategic partner, China is Russia’s strategic partner. Strategic partnerships imply that you can co-operate closely in certain issues and areas, often chiefly in the economic field. The positive trajectory has been helped by growing economic ties between the two have been bourgeoning with China emerging as India’s largest trading partner. The Sino-India trade stands at \$ 70 billion in 2015, providing a basis for long-term engagement¹¹. India should project herself as a big power strategic autonomy, rather than an average member of a U.S lead alliance. New Delhi’s strategy suffers from uncertainty and a sense of insecurity. The point is that how can India rise successfully without Chinese constraints. Is it possible? The answer is yes, but it is possible if awareness could be generated at high policy level dialogues; academic and cultural exchange programmes, and maintaining transparency in bilateral and multilateral relationship. India-China has expanded their canvas of engagement on a host of a global cross-cutting issues like- climate change, terrorism, multilateral trade

relations etc. The two Asia's rising power could intensify co-operation and co-ordination in multinational pluralistic organizations, including WTO, UN, BRICS, G-20 and SCO. Active management of relationship can help to anticipate and defuse potential sources of conflict¹². It is true that we (India) must engage with China but at the same time we should continue with the ongoing dialogues on many lingering issues; i.e. border dispute, Arunachal Pradesh, Pakistan, Chinese influence in South Asian neighbours etc. However, the point is that how to deal with rapidly rising China? The present researcher's understanding is that to engage with China but at the same time remain equally alert about Chinese aggressive activity towards India-which is the best way to deal with China.

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