

Research Paper

One Belt One Road and Vision of Emerging India of 21st Century

Submitted by:

Dr. Krishan Gopal Tyagi

Department of History

Ram Lal Anand College, University of Delhi

Indian Institute of Advance Study

Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla

171005

Abstract: Historically, Silk Route was inter-continental route and played 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 from Quad perspective. Indo-Pacific region is emerging as a Great Game, world powers are using it to establish their supremacy. In 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 Indo-Pacific Region as Indian government has good foreign relations. US-India ties for the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for prosperity (IPEF) is fresh economic arrangement to encounter China's growing influence in the region with integrated, resilient and clean economies. The second Quad Summit saw more concerted efforts in this direction.

Keywords: Silk Route Revival, Geo-Economics, Quad, Indo-Pacific, Maritime Security, Indian Supremacy, Victory over China.

Introduction: India is taking seriously to One Belt and One Road (OBOR) development strategy of China for connecting and cooperation between Asia-Pacific and European countries. It is new form of the Silk Route in 21st century. This is a regional economic cooperation strategy proposed by Chinese president, XI Jinping when delivering 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 an alternative to One Belt and One Road creating the "Indo-Pacific Strategy". Thus, the initiative is renamed the alliance into the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific strategy" (FOIP). 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.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the only world statesman to have stood up to China's OBOR strategy. During a Congressional hearing, Michael Pillsbury, Director of Center on Chinese Strategy at the prestigious think-tank Hudson Institute, told lawmakers that Modi and his team have been quite outspoken against Chinese President Xi Jinping ambitious project because OBOR initiative includes violation of Indian sovereign claims. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi rejected 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 and have shown their readiness to seek a mutually acceptable solution. Bilateral relations improved further during Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's visit of China in June 2003. A memorandum on border trade signed by the Chinese Commerce Minister Lu Fuyuan and External Affairs Minister Yashwant Sinha. The memorandum's preamble clearly notes that the two countries agree on 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 reopening of this pass implies the revival of the ancient Silk Route over which the famed Chinese fabric was traditionally brought to India, to be traded for goods from the subcontinent. From Nathula, Lhasa, Tibet's capital, is 416 km, the Tibetan trading station of Yatung is 21 km and the Chumbitang settlement only 9 km down the road into the Chumbi Vally, bound by the great peaks of Paunhuri and Chomolhar. In addition, Delhi is 1,785 km and Srinagar 2,595 km from the

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

Pass. This trans-frontier economic cooperation has restored historic trading routes, access roads and pilgrimage rights, and created a new framework.

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

Recently, it is accepted (primarily among western nations) that Indo-pacific has not set strategy to contain China; the containment concept has largely been derived by China's rise and aggressive expansion.² Facing tough relations with Pakistan and China, India needs to focus on the Indo-Pacific region in a continental perspective. At the first summit of Indo-Pacific Business, External Affairs Minister Jishankar symbolizes a phrase "Return to History" in terms of Indian maritime trade.³

² Rory Medcalf, "Indo-Pacific Vision: Giving Solidarity a Chance", Asia Policy 14, no.3, 2019.

³ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhary, "Indo-Pacific Reflects Benefits of Rebalancing: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, The Economic Times, July 6, 2021

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"- Security and Growth for the entire region.⁴

Economic Needs of India and Indo-Pacific Region: In 21st Century, India and China have been the fastest growing economies of Asia. In this direction, India's development reflects positive trends. India has been against China's Belt and Road Initiative and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Diplomacy of India in the last few years has been to counter China and its influence. India faces China as a competitor 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 needs investments, technology and a manufacturing ecosystem to employ millions of its young population and improve its living standards. 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 function as a prime locomotive for Eurasian development, China does presently. India has displayed its keen interest in the future course of strategic alignments around the Caspian and Eurasian Land-Bridge.

⁴ India's Indo-Pacific Strategy was enunciated by PM Modi during the Shangrila Dialogue in 2018 as the SAGAR, Doctrine in Singapore, June 01, 2018.

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 multilateral relations between India, Russia, China, Iran and other countries of the region, reflect a growing orientation toward mutually beneficial economic cooperation, in which the Land-Bridge is a central element.⁵ Rapidly expanding economy of India, combined with its near total dependence on energy imports makes India a potential consumer of Central Asian Caspian oil and gas. And India is interested in developing export markets in Central Asia for both its inexpensive consumer goods and its high-tech products.⁶ India's integration into the Eurasian Land-bridge system would mean an enormous gain for the economy of Eurasia as a whole.

Indian Diaspora: The Indian diaspora will play a significant role in deepening the countries engagement with the Indo-pacific nations. From early medieval period merchant communities of India expanded into Indo-Pacific region. These peoples belongs to Indian ethnic origin⁷ are citizens of their host countries and have spread their faith, languages, scripts, cuisines, communities institutions and culture of India from generation to generation.

India's soft power remains resilient because trading communities circulated between the subcontinent and as far as Japan for trade, often maintaining family and community relations back home. Even today, people in Indian overseas

⁵ 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

⁶ Vijay Kapur, 'A Afghanistan And Central Asia: Differentiated Challenges and Priorities in the Twenty First Century' in K. Warikoo (ed), *Himalyan and Central Asian Studies*, vol. 8 Nos. 2-3, April-Sept. 2004, (New Delhi), p. 12.

⁷ https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/CountryQuickLink/703_PIO-OCI.pdf (Accessed on 19 December 2021)

business communities like those in East Africa recruit their manpower and find brides and grooms for their sons and daughters from India.

Immigration of Indians on large scale across the Indo-Pacific region took place during the European colonial period, when in addition to Indian merchants, Indian laborers known as coolies and more educated Indians were recruited to work in colonial plantation economies and colonial administrations, respectively. But the Government of India has strengthened its latent soft power through targeted diaspora policies since 2014. India's growing foreign direct investment, infrastructure investments and the presence of Indian companies, have brought to the region an influx of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) who have revitalized the ties of older Indian diaspora communities with India. Besides helping India restore her historic trading neighborhood, which flourished before colonial intervention shifted its focus to Europe and the Atlantic world, the Indian diaspora communities in the Indo-Pacific could play an important role in efforts by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) countries to counter the hegemonic rise of China in the region.

India's Indo-Pacific Vision has two main pillars:

1. The central pivot joining the Indian Ocean community to the Pacific community is ASEAN, the multilateral grouping of 10 nations of South East Asia, which form a "geographical and civilizational bridge" between the two Oceans.
2. India sees all littoral and even non-littoral nations as part of a "free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific," irrespective of their ideology or form of government.

The flourishing free trade agreement (CECA) between the two countries and its virtuous fallout on the Indian community in Singapore, Indonesia, Oman and Kenya can be gauged from these facts:⁸

Singapore-to-India trade	\$8.68 billion (2020-2021)[14] Trade from Singapore to India increased from 2005 to 2019 since CECA came into force.[15]
India-Singapore bilateral trade	\$21.98 billion (April 2020 to March 2020) \$23.67 billion (April 2019 to March 2020)[16]
Singapore's FDI in India	\$8,057 million (April 2021 – updated September 2021)[17] \$17,419 million (April 2020 – March 2021)
Indian FDI in Singapore	2019 – S \$ 1,590.2 million (in Singapore dollar)[18] 2018 – S \$ 1,194.1 million (Note: Singapore data is updated only up till 2019. Currency is Singapore dollar.)
Singaporean Indian origin citizens	362,274[19] Citizens of Indian ethnicity represented 7.5% of population in 2020 (7.4% in 2010)
Singapore's Non-Resident Indian population	About 350,000 (making up 21% of Singapore's expat population of 1.6 million) [20]

Indonesia-India bilateral trade	\$17.50 billion (2020-2021),[30] up from \$4.3 billion (2005-2006)[31][32]
Indian FDI in Indonesia	\$995.18 million in 2215 project (2000-2018).[33] Because most Indian FDI is routed through Singapore and other gateways, it is likely that the amount of FDI is higher
Indonesians of Indian ethnicity and NRIs	About 120,000 (as of 2018), who are concentrated in Greater Jakarta, Medan, Surabaya and Bandung. 8500 are NRIs and 111,500 are Indonesians of Indian descent.[34]*The Indonesian Census no longer lists ethnicities as a category.

⁸Indian diaspora: soft power in the Indo-Pacific

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Oman-India bilateral trade	\$4.6 billion (April 2020 to February 2021)\$5.93 billion (2019-2020)[36][37]
Indian FDI in Oman	\$7.5 billion invested in more than 4100 Indian businesses across Oman.
Oman FDI in India	Special Purpose Vehicle Fund (Indian-Omani joint venture) has invested \$100 million since 2011 in India in seven diversified Indian companies. It currently is investing a second tranche of \$220 million.
Persons of Indian Origin and NRIs	Omani-Indian citizens 2911 (July 2020)NRI about 624,000 (May 2021)[38]

Kenya-India bilateral trade	\$2.2158 billion (2019-2020)[40]
Indian FDI in Kenya	More than \$3 billion (2018)[41]
Persons of Indian Origin and NRIs	60,000 Kenyans of Indian ethnicities20,000 NRIs

Establishment of Indian Supremacy: Civilizational footprints of India through history, stretched from the Mediterranean to the Pacific, from the Indian Ocean littoral to Central Asia. In 21st century, economically, politically and 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, Shri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh etc. Simultaneously, we need to make strong

contacts with Great powers like US and Japan, which can help us to break the speed of expansion of China in Indo-Pacific region. India needs to invest soft and hard power in the region. Coal industry of India, which has fifth biggest position in the world can fulfill energy needs of many countries of Indo-Pacific region, 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 basis of cooperation among IPEF Nations, and these three pillars will pave the way for development, peace and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region.

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