Sino-Russian Strategic Partnership in the Multiplex World Order: Challenges for India in the Asia-Pacific Region

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Abstract

Realignment of power between Russia-China is new power landscape in Asia-Pacific region. This article analyses the enhancing new challenges for India’s security architecture after the Sino-Russian realignment of powers in the Asia-Pacific region. The two Asian powers increased their proximity in the various fields like geo-strategic, economic, defence and other global issues. The study focused on the new challenges for India foreign policy in the Asia-Pacific region. It focused such as maritime security, non-traditional security and challenge for its multi-alignment policy under the multi-complex world order. Lastly, the study focused on paradigm shift of India’s foreign policy towards the defensive multilateralism with the positive unilateralism.

Keywords: Realignment of Power, Russia-China, Multiplex World Order, Indian Concerns

Introduction

Power realignment between Russia-China in the Asia-Pacific region and Chinese aggressiveness in the South China Sea one of the major concerns of India’s security dilemma in the new world order. The realignment of two major powers created the maritime security dilemma for India’s policy-makers to balance between west and rest of world. After, the realignment between major powers India suspicious about its relations with Russia due to its strategic lilt toward China in the Asia-Pacific region. Rajesh Rajagopalan in his article “Sino-Russian bonhomie brewing; India should be wary” (2014) in the ‘Economic Times’ observe that antagonism between the US-Russia over the Ukraine crisis will impact the India’s relations with Russia. Therefore, Russia is shifting towards the rising China to fulfil its geo-strategic, economic interests to counter the US leads world order. He examined that it created the narrative such as “Russi-Chini Bhai-Bhai”. All entire contexts are building the new predicament between Indo-Russian relations. Thus, India can pay the price of a new realignment between two major powers or it is going to balance with its multilateral approach in the Asia-Pacific region. These are some questions which study is going to deal with more authentic and reliable investigations. Therefore, Sino-Russian
realignment of powers created the maritime security dilemma and several other challenges for Indian foreign policy.

**Multiplex World Order & Russia-China Strategic Partnership in the Asia-Pacific Region**

During the cold-war period, the world was divided in the bipolar power structure, in which one led by the US and another by former USSR. It was the struggle between the two dominant ideologies for upsurges their influence in the entire world. Later, after the cold-war period The US emerged in the international politics as a single superpower. Samuel P. Huntington in his article “The Lonely Superpower” (1999) argued that it does not mean world politics is under the unipolar world. He examined that world politics under the uni- multipolar world order. It means that one superpower and several major powers in the mainstream of the global politics. However, some scholars of International Politics called it unipolar world order.

Thus, a contemporary world order under the new complexity due to such reasons like the emergence of regional powers such as China, Russia, India, Brazil, South Africa and other regional powers. On the other hand, US relative decline last couple of years such as during the Afghanistan war and more recently in the Ukraine crisis. It increased the multi- complexity under the new world order. Amitav Acharya in his article “The end of American World Order” (2018) in “The Hindu” argued that what will come after the unipolar world? Either multi-polar world or The US- China leads bipolar world order. Further, he examines that it will neither be multi-polar nor bipolar. He considers global world order will yield a shape as a “multi- complex world order. The Multi- Complex world order means that when every great and regional power bound together with complex forms due to several reasons such as geographical, economic, strategic and in the case of certain global issues. Therefore, he justified his argument and said that every great and regional power bound with together with giant interdependence and their regional interests. Currently, the international state looks like a multi- complex theatre which every power play, their role as a different variety of shows. Actually, multi-complexity can inter- link among the great and regional powers in the Asia-Pacific complex theatre. Recently, the region has been a witness of the power landscape in the global world politics. Since, the relative decline of the US world order the structure of world politics shifted towards the Trans- Atlantic to Pacific region. Mainly, it was the China, India, Russia, Japan and Australia centric. These countries have geostrategic and economic links with the South East Asian countries.

The US has already predominant position due to certain security treaties with Japan, South Korea, Philippines, and Singapore. Furthermore, it enlarged its approach in this region after its declaration of the Asia Pivot policy. Therefore, each power tried to extend their stretch with the ASEAN countries to increase their Geo-strategic, economic and maritime relations with these countries. However, the US and China have enormous central competition in this particular region to make the power balance in the Asia-Pacific region. Nevertheless, other powers such as Russia increase its presence in the North-Pacific region by its “Russia for East” Policy. It expanded its reach with individual flat with ASEAN countries and extended its
integrated approach to China to counter the US presence in this region. Japan and Australia have their separate maritime security interests. Moreover, India has their maritime security worry in the Indo-Pacific region. However, all entire contexts create the new security complexity in this particular region.

Meanwhile, Fazal Rehman the think tank of Pakistan Strategic Studies Institute of Islamabad (SSII) examine that the pivot of Asia-Pacific complicated the Asian security architecture. Further, he said it is an evident alarm of “Quasi-Cold-War” in this particular region (Keck, 2014). Moreover, some other scholars like Ninan Koshy in his article “US pivot risks Asia-Pacific cold war” (2014) examine that South Asia one of the geo-strategic region in the Asian continent. The region enhanced under the strategic maritime rival between the China and India. Further, he assumed that the announcement of the pivot is beginning of the “New Cold-War” in the Asia-Pacific region. He extended his statement with further argument and said that the place of old cold war was the Europe. Newly, after the US pivot of the Asia-Pacific region creates the new theatre of cold war in the Asia-Pacific region, with the new enmity of the Chinese emergence. In fact, the entire situation creates the scenario of new cold-war in the world politics. However, I agreed with the term of the new cold war, but the picture of global politics, are not looking like an old cold war and structure of power is not of the bipolar world order.

Currently, the world order under the multi-complexities obvious reasons such as the interdependencies among the great powers and regional powers. In fact, multi-complex world order creates the new dynamics in the Asia-Pacific region. The new power landscape in this region creates the situations such as the “multi-complex cold war”. Therefore, all entire circumstances create the new type of cold-war, which great powers and every regional power playing a very active role in this particular region. Mainly, the middle powers are playing a very defensive role to make the healthiest environment under these new complexities. Furthermore, all powers are increasing their bilateral proximity with the ASEAN countries and increase their engagement in South East Asian regional institutions such as EAS and ARF. Therefore, it creates the challenge for India’s foreign policy that how India protects their maritime security interests under these new complexities.

**Power Realignment between Russia and China: Challenges for India’s**

The power realignment between the two Asian powers has created new dynamics in the Asian continent. It is the new improving mark of the 21st century, which power of balance is shifting towards the Western to the Eastern world. However, Russia and China have several individual differences, but, both have the same strategic pose in the Asia-Pacific region against the most ambitious US pivotal policy. On the other hand, India has its various concerns with the new power shift such as its geostrategic links in the Indo-Pacific region (Kumar, 2015). Hence, it has dissimilar predictions and response towards the US pivot contrast to Russia and China. Further, it has also different concerns towards the Sino-Russian
realignment. However, India’s response to this new realignment is very much close its multilateralism defensive strategies that will discuss in the below points.

India’s Maritime Security Dilemma

The regional security architecture of the Asia-Pacific region interlinked with India and its maritime security fears. Mainly, the US shaped security architecture in this region during the cold war period. It increased its approach with these countries to stop the communist influence over the region. Therefore, it enlarged the bilateral as well as a multilateral approach in this particular region and made the strong regional security framework with the ASEAN countries (Sahashi, 2011; Kumar, 2015). The central, dynamic change was occurring in this region after the US Pivotal policy in the region. Furthermore, behind this background Sino-Russia increased their proximity one step forward for counter the US pivot. Both, Sino-Russia came close to reshape the changing security architecture such as the Asia-centric. Therefore, under these entire contexts India also worried about their particular maritime security interests in the Indo-Pacific region. It is the major immediate neighbouring country that shared the maritime boundary with the Asia-Pacific region. In fact, India has strong Geo-strategically, Geo-economic security concerns in this region. India also has concern with several issues such as human security, environmental security, security related to natural resources and most significant regional security in this particular region. Therefore, India has non-traditional security concern in the Indian ocean area with the new concept of maritime regionalism in this specific region (Rumley & Doyle, et al, 2013). India also introduced the new term “Indo-Pacific” in this region to characterize its role in this region. The concept ensures the India’s future security anxiety in the Indo-Pacific region. On the other hand, it is also aware of the Chinese hasty rise and its maritime involvement in the Indo-Pacific region. China also increased its geostrategic proximity with Russia to counter the US domination. Consequently, all entire contexts create the maritime security dilemma for India. Thus, the involvement of the major powers such as the US, China, and Russia in this particular region create the new challenges for India, which how it will protect its maritime security interests under these complex situations. Genuinely, India has a dilemma about its policies after the Sino-Russian realignment in the Asia-Pacific region.

Challenges for its Multi-Alignment Policy

India has a middle power status after its independence due to its large scale of the geographical structure, human resources as well as its economic potential. Therefore, it maintained its position as a middle power during the cold-war period and led the third world countries as a leader of NAM. Since, the disintegration of the former USSR, India has promoted itself as a responsible nuclear power under the new world order. It is also ambitious to play the respective role in the international community under the multi-polar world. Moreover, it is more active to promote the multilateral approach, especially in economic reforms such as the WTO, World Bank, and IMF, etc. India directly concerned with the non-traditional security threats to climate change, maritime security, terrorism and peace and stability of state-building in the South Asia. It is also increasing its active engagement in the UNO for maintaining the peace and security in the new
world order. Furthermore, it helped in the establishment of G-20 and increased the strategic partnerships with each great powers such as the US, China and European Union (EU). It is also involved with the East Asian institutions like EAS and Asian Regional Forum (ARF) and engaged in multilateral naval exercises such as the US, Japan, Australia and Singapore (Kumar, 2014).

On the other hand, India is standing with the third world countries to make the equilibrium in economic institutions and equal representation in the new world order. It is also sharing the alternative stage in the BRICS organization with, such as the developing economies like China, Russia, Brazil and South Africa. Recently, the BRICS countries established the NDB for finding the new opportunities through economic institutions, and try to make the new alternatives in the new economic world order. Nevertheless, India increased its approach with other middle power, such as Brazil and South Africa. These powers like India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) launched the new institution called as IBSA or G3. The Central purpose of the establishment of IBSA is upsurge the reliability among the countries in such a several fields like energy, security and increase the trade, commerce, and South- South cooperation for permanent membership in United National Security Council (UNSC) (Flemes, 2007). Currently, India has a dilemma towards power new realignment. It also created the dilemma for its multilateral approach to the new world order. Furthermore, Amitabh Mattoo in his article “A Doctrine of Economic Leavers, Soft Power” (2014) in “The Hindu” observe that India could follow a “Multi- Alignment Policy” which described by Mr. Shashi Tharoor during the UPA-2 regime. Multi- alignment means that with all the great powers. He said that the new government will also follow the same way that emphasized in the first address of the president’s speech that the new government will develop the new economic strategies and cooperation with China. The new government also established the modern infrastructure with the help of Japan. It also focused the foundations of the Indo- Russian relations. Furthermore, multi- alignment policy renewed the India’s relations with the European Union (EU) and increase the bilateral relations between the US and India. The policy gives a new strengthens between the Indo- US relations, especially after the US “Asia Pivot” policy. However, the new realignment in the Asia Pacific region has created the challenges for India’s multi-alignment policy. It is the challenge for India that how it makes the balance between the two major clubs such as one is Russia- China and another hand the US and its alliances. Therefore, entire contexts create the dilemma for India’s policy maker how they sustain the balance under this new fulcrum of power in the Asia – Pacific region.

**Non- Traditional Security Challenges**

Non- traditional security challenges one of the major threats to all the South and South East Asian countries. Non- traditional security concept was developed by non- Western thinkers, especially after the cold- war period. It was the time when non- Western countries were talking about their non- traditional security threats, such as nuclear- proliferation, global terrorism, environmental degradation, energy security, regional security, maritime security and security in the trade and tariff in the economic institutions.
Thus, India is one of the major countries that has an active concern with non-traditional security, especially after the 9/11 attack. It is facing significant non-traditional security threats such as like energy security, global terrorism and maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. Since, the Sino-Russian realignment in the Asia-Pacific region India is worried about its non-traditional security, especially, after the Russia's conflict with West over the Ukraine crisis. It pushed the Russia towards the China as well as Pakistan. Therefore, India is facing several non-traditional security threats. First; India is worried about its energy security in the coming couple of years. There is a future possibility that India can purchase the natural gas from Moscow. C. Raja Mohan also (2014) advocated that there are three possible routes of natural gas from Russia to India. The first is from Iran and South of the Pakistan, and another must be a more terrorist influential area in the North Afghanistan to Pakistan. The third one is a China to across Great Himalayas through the territory of the Jammu and Kashmir. Hence, India is worried about the realignment between two Asian powers, especially after the US pivot. Rapidly, Russia focused in Asia-Pacific region through its policy “Russia for East”. Therefore, all entire situations create the dilemma for India's energy security that how India deals within the new realignment. Second; recently, the maritime regionalism is another significant non-traditional threat to India. It is the challenge for India policy maker that how they make the new mechanism for maritime regionalism under the new power landscape in the region. The competition between China and US creates the security dilemma to maritime regionalism process as well as India's maritime security in the region.

Third; the global terrorism is one of the major reasons for closeness behind the background of the Indo-US relations in the new world order. India is comfortable with US lead NATO forces in Afghanistan as well as US pivot in the region. India also wants to stop the Somalian piracy in the Indian-Ocean Region (IOR) with the help of the US. It extended its engagement in the Straits of Malacca and the Lombok and Sunda in the SCS to save its interests in this particular region (Rumley, D., Doyle, T. & Snjay Chaturvedi, 2013). On the other hand, both Russia-China does not want to more interference of US in the Asian continent. Therefore, the entire situations create the dilemma for India’s counter-terrorism policy. However, there are other non-traditional issues such as global warming, human security, sea piracy and thrust for multipolar world order, India is standing with Russia and China.

Conclusion
Above investigation on Russia-China geostrategic and geo-economics relations led the new suspicion for New Delhi in the wider Asia-Pacific region. However, India have good relations with Russia hence still there is future uncertainty prevail due to Russia’s geostrategic tilt toward the Beijing. Hence, New Delhi has started its geostrategic proximity with the US, Japan, South Korea and ASEAN countries. Further, India-US geostrategic partnership especially in the wider Indo-Pacific region is small response by India with the US and its strategic ASEAN partners. India’s 'Act East Policy' is one of the recent instance to response this new Sino-Russian strategic partnership in the region. New Delhi is also conscious about its
maritime security in the greater Indian Ocean region. Therefore, it has started its early responses with NAM 2.0 or its horizontal responses through launching ‘Sager Mala’ and ‘Act East Policy’ in the greater Indo-Pacific region. Lastly the investigation close with adding new analyses that New Delhi cannot ignore Sino-Russian geostrategic proximity in the region. Multiplex World order is full of uncertainties therefore; New Delhi has also started its geostrategic proximity with the US and its ASEAN alliances without harming previous strategic alliances in the Asia-Pacific region.

References