



INDIA CHINA AND ARAB: CHANGING DYNAMICS IN TRILATERAL RELATIONSHIP

¹Dhiraj Vij ²Dr. Jyotika Teckchandani ³Prof. Javed Ahmad Khan

¹Ph.D. Scholar, Amity Institute of Social Sciences, Amity University, Noida

²Assistant Professor - II, Amity Institute of Social Sciences, Noida

³Professor (Retired), Centre for West Asian Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

¹Dhiraj Vij – vijsdhiraj@gmail.com

²Dr. Jyotika Teckchandani – jtekchandani@amity.edu

³Prof. Javed Ahmad Khan – jkhan2@jmi.ac.in

Abstract - India from the 1950 is the first non-socialist block country to have established a diplomatic relation with China and Arab nations and basically both countries have moved further in their cooperation to develop each other through their shared and advanced means.

Historically, India has a close relationship with the Arab world whether it was the Mesopotamian and Harrapan civilization or India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru being a friend of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser who partnered in setting up of Non-Aligned Movement. About more than 70 percent of oil India purchased from the North-African and gulf region. There has always been cooperation and good trade policy between the two region and It is still developing in recent years.

Historically, there have been no conflicts between China and the Arab world and both Egypt and Algeria are of importance in building Sino-Arab relations. Both Arab states and China needs each other support in their development on international scale.

Keywords: Diplomatic, Relations, Agreements, Civilization, Cooperation, Conflicts, Building, International.

Contact No.: +91- 9278671424

INTRODUCTION

India is the seventh largest country by area, it is the second most populous country as well as the largest democracy in the world. India has always followed the philosophy of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, always felt the needs for frequent contacts with all regions of the world and never in its history had even been in isolation in international order. The philosophy of tolerance (or co-existence), respect for faiths and races had been the essence of its civilization. India has the world's fifth largest military expenditure, second largest armed force, sixth largest economy by nominal rates and third largest economy in terms of purchasing power, India is a nuclear power

(having doctrine of No-First Use), a developing global power and a potential superpower. India, being the one of the vibrant economic and military power in the present era its has a prominent voice in international affairs. India has adopted a foreign policy of neutrality and non-involvement with respect to maintain a peace between with its neighbors as well as leaders of other countries.

China, officially the People's Republic of China (PRC), is the world's most populous country, it is one of the largest countries by total area. The political structure in China was based on monarchy, example- Xia dynasty. The monarchy system came to an end in 1912 with the Xinhai Revolution, when a republic replaced the last monarch of the Qing dynasty. The Chinese Civil War led to the division of territory in 1949, when the Communist Party of China established the People's Republic of China, a one-party state, while the Kuomintang led establishment gained control of island region namely Taiwan strait. The political status of Taiwan is still in dispute. China interacts with foreign nations and expresses its political, economic, and cultural strengths, weaknesses, and values. China being the fastest growing economy in the last few decades and emerging superpower, claims that it had followed the independent foreign policy for peace. The Arab world or Arab Countries currently consists of the 22 Arab countries of the Arab League. These Arab states occupy North Africa and West Asia; an area stretching from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east, and from the Mediterranean Sea to the Northern region of African continent and the region surrounding the Indian Ocean. The Arab League was formed in 1945 to present the interests of Arab people to the world and to pursue the political unification of the Arab countries a project known as Pan-Arabism. It also has four observer members: Brazil, Eritrea, India, and Venezuela. The Arab League itself is an observer in other international and regional organizations, like the Non-Aligned Movement, the African Union, the United Nations, and has observed several summits of ASEAN. The Organization of Islamic Countries and their desire in the contemporary world is to enjoy their freedom, territorial integrity and sovereignty. This group of nations (with their economic might) can influence the international economic structure, as many nation states economic largely depend on the oil or petroleum products that they import from the west Asian oil producing states.

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Historically India has a close relationship with the Arab world whether it was the Mesopotamian and Harrapan civilization or India's first PM Jawaharlal Nehru being a friend of Egyptian leader Gamal Abdel Nasser who partnered in setting up of NAM. There are important investments made by India to various countries in the Arab Region stretching from Oman to Egypt, Sudan and other countries. Most of our external trade passes through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. India's commitment to the Palestinian cause and being hostile towards Israel (India established full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992), common views on international developments and strong economic and commercial relations establishes the basic tenets of Indo-Arab relationship in present era.

The interaction between India and the Arab world has been dynamic, diverse and multi-dimensional. However, impact of cultural and civilizational contacts and linkages between the

two states/regions witnessed significant developments in the last few decades. Adam was landed in India in the heaven of sky. He set his first step in Sri Lanka, which was a part of the greater India (Pangea). Goods like perfumes and spices were move to the Arab world from South India. The Old Testament also have evidence of maritime mercantile relations between India and the Arab world in king Solomon's period.

The relationship between India and Arab has been through many difficult times with the massive people-to-people contacts and also includes religious tourism and migration of work-force between the two regions. The Indus Valley Civilization was one of the world's first known civilizations with urbanization. This civilization developed in the vast plains of the Indus River and adjacent regions which are now in Pakistan and western India. This civilization developed almost at the same time as the early stages of Egypt and Mesopotamia. This civilization spread from the high-altitude regions of Baluchistan and Afghanistan to Gujarat state of India. There are evidences for the existence of trade contact with the surrounding cultures in the Arabian Gulf, west and central Asia and peninsular India, during the peak of this civilization. Arab historians of different periods held the view that Sindh and Hind were two different countries. Hindustan was popularly known as Hind for people of gulf region. In the recent times, cultural and literature linkages between the two regions are gaining momentum as it can be seen with the establishment of Indo-Arab Cultural Centre, Jamia Millia Islamia. This Centre is regularly engaged in fostering the age-old cultural relations by organizing Arab cultural programs in India as well as promoting Indian culture in Arab world.

India receives nearly 70% of energy imports come from the Middle-Eastern region and North African region. There has always been cooperation and good trade policy between the two region and it is still developing in recent years. But with U.S. sanctions on Iran coming into effect the global oil trade will be hugely affected. India, being the supplier of oil from Arab region after China, may face consequences in meeting its domestic demand. The Indian oil market is already trembling due to crude oil price inflation and the depreciation of Indian rupee against the U.S. dollar. In 2017, Iran became India's third largest supplier of petroproducts, after Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Indian government has decided to not to import oil from Iran. India expects to fulfill shortage of oil by increasing the supply of crude oil from other Arab countries. India is amongst the major exporting nations of gulf oil. India being the non-oil producing economy, the disparities between demand and supply of crude oil is quite relevant for economic health of India. The economic situation of India is crucial and to meet its growing energy demands need to have bilateral relations with gulf nations.

INDIA AND CHINA

The relationship between India and China also refers to as the Indo-Sino relations. The geo-political importance of the two most populous nations of the world that have enjoyed thousands of cultural interfaces, spiritual relations, trade relations through maritime Silk Route, until the medieval era and the breakup of communications between the people of two great Asian civilization. The Indian National Movement and Revolution in China rendered support

and sympathy to each other in their common struggle. It was the vision and aspiration of our forefathers that being a neighbor, both India and China would come closer in achieving their developmental goals in the future. India was among the first nations in the world to recognize the PRC (People's Republic of China) in 1948, and with this recognition there was an essence of trust between the people and leadership of India and China in the initial years of 1950s. There were frequent contact and exchanges between the people and leadership of both the nations through various channels that led to the declarations of Panchsheel agreement between India and China, that strived for peaceful co-existence and respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity of each other nation. Relations between the PRC and India deteriorated during the rest of 1960s and the early 1970s as China-Pakistan relations improved and Sino-Soviet relations worsened. Diplomatic contact between the two governments was minimal although not formally severed.¹

The India China relationship after the adoption of New Economic Policy led to intense negotiations and diplomatic exchange for Free Trade Agreement of different hues, both at bilateral and multilateral level have the potential to convert challenges into opportunity for the benefit of both the fastest growing economies. Yet another highlight of contemporary international politics is the slew of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between and among nation states and multilateral architectures, which have been found useful to prevent the detrimental effects of acrimonious situations that have occurred between the two states. The 21st century brought many opportunities for both the nations and with the warming up of relations between India and the United States of America (USA), followed significant transformation in the Indo-China relations, with Pakistan being an active part of all the consultations and negotiations between the leadership of these two Asian neighbors.

The intense border disputes negotiations between the Indian National Security Advisor and the Chinese interlocutor have had several rounds of negotiations and talks for the summing up of dispute that have the major bone of contention between the rapidly growing relations and cooperation between both the states. The changing dynamics of India and China relationship can be understood through different phases of time under which both the states maintain cooperation in social, political, diplomatic arena. Both the nations have been successful in making their presence felt at the global level.

Thus, it is pre-requisite to deflect the sense of misgiving and mistrust that is fraught in the Indo-Sino relationship. The cooperation would require much more concerted efforts to bridge the trust deficit to make relations warmer and more progressive. The high-level visits or diplomatic negotiations, bilateral dialogue would be more fruitful, and establish a strong mechanism that address all the outstanding issues of further cooperation.

¹Inderjeet Singh Baghel, *INDIA Factor in CHINA-PAKISTAN Relation*, (Delhi: AAKANKSHA PRAKASHAN, 2017), 15.

The dynamics of global and regional geo-politics have also found their resonance in the bilateral relationship between India and China, as that Cold War geo-politics that greatly impacted the relationship among both the countries.

However, since the late 1980s both nations have successfully attempted to reignite diplomatic and economic ties. In spite of business relationship there are several tensions between India and China that both states need to deal with in order to establish close relations. The two states have also developed their defence and political relationship. Though bilateral trade and with growing economic ties, India faces massive trade imbalance drastically in favor of China. Simultaneously, both the countries have failed to resolve their long-standing border dispute and repeated Chinese military incursions into Indian territory. However, the aftermath relations between these two Asian giants were fueled with many misunderstandings, turbulences and misconceptions about each other in the decades after independence. It has been characterized by both border disputes trust deficit and by economic/trade cooperation and sub-regional groupings.

The overall nature of India China relationship has been multi-facet as on one front, both the nations are directly in front of each other on the borders in the North-East India, though China consider it as a part of their territory of South-Tibet and till now issues stapled visa to the Indian citizens of the region, India very firmly stated in all their interactions with China that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of India and is one of the significant states of the Union of India. This issue is one the major concern apart from other bilateral disputes on the LAC (Line of Actual Control) and in the region of Ladakh in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir or the recent two-and-a-half-month-long stand-off between the Indian and Chinese armed forces in the Doklam sector that involved Bhutan also and on the other, the economic cooperation between these two Asian powers with India as one of the largest market of Chinese goods and became important destination for the capital investment by the Chinese companies. The statement issued by Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Raveesh Kumar said, “the expeditious engagement of border personnel that both sides had agreed on had been almost completed under verification.”²

The significant thing that needs to appreciate is both that nations handled their disputes in a mature manner through diplomatic channels, resolving all their outstanding issues through the process of dialogue and deliberation and must respect the confidence building measures (CBMs) that are undertaken by both the states in the recent past. PM Gandhi was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit China since 1954. Diplomatic relationship between India and China restored in 1976. Eight rounds of talks had been held since Chinese Foreign Minister

² Jayanth Jacob and Sutirtho Patranobis, “Doklam standoff ends: India pulls troops, no word on Beijing’s road along Border,” *Hindustan Times*, August 28, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/doklam-standoff-india-says-has-agreed-to-disengagement-of-troops-after-talks-with-china/story-xybEpTjdsyFbobAjrf8yEN.html>

Huan Hua's visit in 1981, but without much progress.³ Both India and China are the fastest growing economies that complement each other and this economic might of these two states gradually increasing their status at the international level.

CHINA AND ARAB WORLD

Historically, there have been no significant rifts between China and the Arab world; both sides have common views on many international questions. During the Cold War, China was one of the countries that raised the Palestinian question. During the 1960s and 1970s, China had supported in the Arab-Israeli conflict when Beijing was firm in providing political support for Arabs in various international arenas including the UN Security Council. It had provided material and military support to a number of Arab countries and also to the Palestinians in their struggle against Israeli occupation. The study outlines how the Chinese strength has reached to the level of superpower and simultaneously became the permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Yet Sino Arab relations have been cold since the 1980s. In 1994, the UAE became the first Arab country to establish an institution for Islamic studies in China when it founded the UAE center for the Study of Islamic Culture and Teaching of Arabic language at BFSU.⁴ With focusing its attention to its domestic agenda shifting from politics to the economy, China is more concerned about its relations with great powers, the United States in particular, to building a favorable environment for domestic economic development. Therefore, China's investments in the Middle East have been reduced both politically and economically. However, several recent developments and events shows that, after two decades of chill or ignorance, Sino-Arab relations are beginning to build up again. This is due to the recent high-level bilateral exchanges.

These exchanges started with the Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit from January 26 to February 5, 2004, to Egypt, Algeria and the Arab League as one part of his Europe-Africa tour. Both Egypt and Algeria are of special importance in the history of Sino-Arab relations. Egypt was the first Arab state to establish diplomatic relations with China (1956); the other Arab states followed Cairo's lead. Algeria was one of three countries that put forward the proposal for the reinstatement of China's permanent membership in the UN Security Council in 1971. President Hu's visit showcased new Chinese leadership attaches great significance to China-Arab relationship.

³ Raghav Bahl, "Missed Opportunities: 25 years after Deng Xiaoping & Rajiv Gandhi," *First Post*, December 13, 2013, <https://www.firstpost.com/world/missed-opportunities-25-years-after-deng-xiaoping-rajiv-gandhi-1313413.html>

⁴ Muhamad Zulfikar Rakhmat, "China and the UAE: New Cultural Horizons," *MEI@75*, March 19, 2015, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/china-and-uae-new-cultural-horizons>

Besides the signing of bilateral agreements on economic cooperation, two diplomatic steps were taken during Hu's visit. First, President Hu announced the establishment of the China Arab Cooperation Forum, which acts as a mechanism for future China-Arab cooperation. Second, President Hu enshrined 4 pillars for developing a new dimension of bilateral partnership between China and Arab states:

- Develop diplomatic relations on the grounds of trust,
- to forge closer trade and economic links,
- to expand cultural exchanges,
- to strengthen cooperation in global arena with the motive of protecting global peace and sustainable development.

China's attempt to maintain and expand relations with Arab states encouraged Arab leaders. Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad made a four-day trip to China where President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao held talks with President. Both states exchanged notes on mutual interests. The two Presidents also signed the China Syria cooperation agreement on water conservancy, a memorandum of understanding on agricultural cooperation, an agreement on economic and technological cooperation, and agreements on cooperation on health and tourism. King Abdullah II of Jordan also visited China following President Asad a month later, his third visit since ascending to the throne. At the meeting with the Chinese president, the two leaders agreed to strengthen multifaceted exchange and cooperation and signed two documents on economic and technical cooperation.

The finance ministers of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) made a joint visit to China. Both sides went to undersigned Framework Agreement on Economic, Trade, Investment and Technological Cooperation between China and the Member States of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC). The two sides also decided to launch negotiations on a China-GCC free trade area to develop and strengthen relations between China and the GCC member states

The policy makers in U.S. indicate that the root of terrorism is authoritarian governments in Middle Eastern countries, and democratizing them has become its policy goal. In 2003, the USA launched Iraqi invasion with declared aim to capture weapons of mass destruction and will not take step back from achieving its goal through military action.

Another reason for the gulf states was to gain help from other global leaders. The European Union and China was another reason. Muslim world wanted China to play dominant role in the geo-economic affairs, especially after the US misadventures in the middle-east. China has many positive attributes. China is developing its military strength rapidly and moving towards challenging US both technologically and economically. In addition, China has also maintained cordial relations with the Arab countries. What is even more important is that China's views on major Middle Eastern issues are quite different from those of the United States, and much closer to those of Arab states. Therefore, the above-mentioned reasons makes China an important nation for essential supplies for Arab world.

CONCLUSION

Comparable to China's links with the Arab World it is today the Indian military as well as government that has the strongest and most appreciated link with the Arab World whether it is a diplomatic relation with different countries or Arab league or the issue of Israel. However, whereas current relations with China have expanded significantly since 2011 into the arts, sciences and academia, India's academic community and its artists, writers, film makers and musicians know little and have few relations with the Arab Countries but it is trying to take initiative to learn more about the culture of Arabs. In our multi-polar world many countries, not least China and India too, have to cope with conflicting priorities. For example, China has strong defense and friendship links with Russia but Russia too is selling weapons to India. Also, China also has defence relations with gulf countries like Iran in order to counter USA. Israel's defense relations with India are very strong and deep rooted. They are long standing, starting well before the current heightened tensions between China and India and are comprised of deals taking years to develop and finalize. Since the 9/11 attacks, fighting terrorism has become significant to the U.S. defence policies, and the gulf region as the critical factor in curbing global terrorism.

In Arab world most of the countries are developing in nature and they want some support from different countries to give their development a boost that is why it tries to gain diplomatic relationship from countries like China and India to strengthen their development as well as their presentation in the world politics. Whereas, India and China are emerging superpowers but have less international representation and by gaining political relationship with the Arab World they will have the support to present themselves more convincingly.

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