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AN EXAMINATION ON THE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE OF CHINA IN 21ST CENTURY

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| KEYWORDS | ABSTRACT |
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| Socio-economic, Military, Communication, 21st Century | The current research analyzes Indian concerns about China's growing impact in the Indian Ocean region, particularly the transformation activities on the China's Maritime Silk Road and China's Silk Road Economic Belt in the 21st century. The research looks deeply at the reasons for the Indian anxiety and misunderstanding of the China Belt and Road Initiative, especially the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The research also claims that global support has exposed the role of China's BRI in regional socio-economic connectivity. India, however, is the largest nation in South Asia and has a positive impact on the Indian Ocean. In other South Asian countries, apart from Pakistan, it plays an important role in the economic, military and communications. The attitude of India is very crucial to the China's BRI. As China's most significant neighbor, the Century Maritime Silk Road With respect to its economy and its military size. |
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INTRODUCTION

The Belt and Road Initiative of China (BRI) is a positive step in reviving ancient maritime history and China silk trade route. BRI in the Chinese history is regarded as Beijing's bold country policy and mega economic strategy. BRI comprises three continents: Asia, Africa and Europe, accounting for about 70 percent of the world's population and 40 percent of the world's GDP (Cai, 2018). In September and October 2013, during President Xi Jinping's visit to Kazakhstan and Indonesia, he introduced the first steps of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (21st Century MSR) and the Silk Road Economic Belt (hereafter SREB). Soon after the declaration of the BRI, under the leadership of Xi Jinping, the Chinese ministries began their tasks. The vision and action to support joint construction of Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road was jointly released by Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Department of Trade and National Commission for Growth and Transformation on the 28 March 2015 (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). The 'Belt' represents these trillion-dollar

program elements, such as 21st Century MSR representing 'Path' and Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The 21st-century MSR stretches from China's coastal ports (14,000 miles long) across the South China Sea to the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal to Southeast Asia and South Asia and Europe via the Suez Canal to the Mediterranean Sea and China and Central Asia, Russia and -Europe affiliated with SREB (Jean-Marc & Colin, 2017). Goal of this initiative in Beijing is to renovate the ancient Silk Roads and modernize the MSR infrastructure of the 21st Century to improve regional economic connectivity and infrastructure growth. For all countries and regions, it strives to cross, the 21st Century MSR has major economic and strategic consequences. The 21st Century MSR will be a key project in the emergence of a new model of political -economic growth based on interconnectivity or flows rather than territorial power, a geopolitical imagination for a globalized world. As far as the regional economic structures are concerned, the MSR geography has been a highly active field. However, under China's BRI, South Asia is a critical area. In the South Asian region, Beijing has already entered into multi-dollar agreements, including the \$ 62 billion China Pakistan Corridor (CPEC) (Khan, & Liu, 2019) and the Bangladesh China India Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC).

The Indian Ocean is geographically a crucial passageway for the China (Brewster, 2018) to strengthen its economic cooperation and strong relations with the countries of South Asia. India is still unconvinced and even resistant to the BRI, the sixth largest economic country in GDP and key competitor in the region (Blah, 2018).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study is of the qualitative kind. The information was gathered from variety of sources, including academic articles, government records, and websites. The data was analyzed in a descriptive manner.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Indian Understanding of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road of China

India is the only South Asian country to occupy an important position in the BRI region of Indian Ocean (IOR) (Blah, 2018). China's planned 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) connects the Pacific and the Indian Ocean as a sea trading route with China's 14000 km coastline. The Indian Ocean is a critical area, as the corridor linking Europe, Africa and the Middle East regions to China through the various junctions in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) plays important role (Medcalf, 2018). China has extreme security consequences on all these paths, causing her to rely on safety perceptions (Cordner, 2018). In addition, Indian Government realized that China's efforts to develop regional economic connectivity with the various countries of region, and in particular with its neighboring Indian Ocean states,

pose a serious threat to its security and influence in region. The 21st century MSR relies heavily on trade routes over Indian Ocean, which is most important means of importing electricity to China (Michael, 2018).

The Chinese government therefore wants to protect its major routes in the fight against crime, especially in the Horn of Africa, in the Indian Ocean (Haiquan, 2017). India has been worried about Beijing's routine Indian Ocean Area (IOR) naval operations and anti-piracy exercises since 2008. China has also been sending its submarines to the IOR in the last few years (Suri, 2016). Most importantly, as basis for speculation of power, the Beijing military base in Djibouti will enable us to reach the ports of the neighboring India (Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) (Suri, 2016). China's growing interests in the IOR threaten India's national and security interests, as well as reduce India's natural interests in the region. On the other hand, India says the BRI will provide China with an opportunity to build a military base in the Indian Ocean for national security purposes (Wu, 2020). This fear continues to test the fact that the MSR of China of the 21st century is part of its naval and maritime strategy of India to establish a network of public ports that can be the basis for warships during the war.

In addition, the deep port of Gwadar in Pakistan and the port of Hambantota in Sri Lanka are important foundations of Indian Ocean's 21st Century MSR in China. In these countries bordering Indian Ocean, Chinese investment and port construction support commercial and maritime activities within the IOR. In meantime, India claims that China intends to set up adequate bases for submarine deployment and replenishment in Sri Lanka's port of the Hambantota and Pakistan's deep seaport of Gwadar. In addition, Sri Lankan and Pakistani waters, Chinese nuclear submarines have begun to appear, with China citing an attempt to extend defence cooperation amid bordering Indian Ocean countries and to seek support for its BRI. Although New Delhi claims that in the Indian Ocean, China's 21st Century MSR will help mask China's military goals. India believes in economic vision that Beijing's Indian Ocean economic routes will have negative impact on its domestic industries and markets. Primary objective of India's foreign policy since independence in 1947 to pursue greater power in the region (Horimoto, 2017).

To achieve this goal, India has adopted communication policies to strengthen its foreign policy in the region in an independent manner. Now, India is in good position in the Indo-Pacific region to play a major power game. With this site, with the 21st Century MSR, India is geographically surrounded by Chinese buildings in Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and places New Delhi in a non-profit and worry-free zone in the Indian Ocean (Malik, 2018). China is not part of the Indian Ocean region geographically, but the 21st Century MSR is helping to create a region for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) region (Wu, 2020). China may challenge India with current balance of power architecture in Indian Ocean region through the 21st Century MSR. India fears that China's vigorous

activities in the Indian Ocean will undermine its dominance in South Asia (Li, 2016). Thus, if India is openly involved in the 21st century MSR, it shows China's presence in the affairs of South Asia and Indian Ocean, contrary to traditional Indian tradition of pursuing position of supremacy in the region.

CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)

The Chinese Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was strongly opposed by New Delhi, so India declined China's invitation at first Belt and Road Initiative Summit in 2017. (Bansari, 2019). CPEC has been called a game-changer in area so far, a lynchpin of the BRI of China and a sign of the Pak-China partnership. The CPEC ties China to the Arab Sea, Beijing's shortest path to import oil and natural products from the energy-rich countries of the Middle East and Gulf (Garlick, 2018). Indian government declares CPEC, violation of the international law and sovereignty in Pakistan Takes Kashmir a controversial position. India sees this route as a Chinese structure that we can use in this area to control Indian Ocean and the surroundings of the new Delhi (Deepak, 2018). Nevertheless, China has repeatedly reiterated that the CPEC is not opposed to any third party in the region, which is only an economic operation to bring the region closer to prosperity.

India's concerns about BRI of China

China has always been optimistic about its diverse social and economic cooperation between the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) regions in BRI. In his three-day state visit to India, President Xi Jinping said, "China and India have a combined population of more than 2.5 billion people." The entire world will listen if China and India talk with one voice. The entire world will pay attention if China and India partner together. It is in China's and India's shared interests to pursue broad consensus and mutually beneficial cooperation. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has compared China and India to "two bodies with one spirit" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). India plays an important role for BCIMEC (Karim & Islam, 2018) and influential community in Indian Ocean region. India can reap tangible benefits from it through the establishment of the tunnel and also remove India's concerns about China's BRI. The 21st century MSR could boost India's trade with Southeast Asian countries and shorten the cross-border route to the Malacca Strait and link India to future connections with Asia Europe.

For India's social and economic development, this economic path will open up great opportunities as more than 22% of Indians live in poverty (Samrat, 2019). India's relations with Myanmar and Southeast Asian countries will also be deepened by BCIMEC. The 21st Century MSR of China should mitigate the lack of maritime infrastructure in India (Palit, 2017). India should take advantage of the Chinese seaport systems. Moreover, India is a massive investor market where, in many sectors, India could easily draw Chinese investors. In addition, the China's 21st Century MSR warmly receives support from IOR countries, especially small island nations that lack financial and maritime infrastructure. India also

decided to invest heavily in China, allowing India to attract more investment from China. India, however, should not fully address the BRI because, on the one hand, China is India's largest market and, on the other hand, many South Asian countries are part of the BRI, which could divide India if it ignores China's major economic communications projects in the Indian region Ocean.

At the same time, the project will support regional growth in the northeastern India and strengthen "Oriental Policy." The 21st Century MSR is India's best forum for improving the bilateral and regional cooperation. To accelerate infrastructure growth, India could use China's economic power. In addition to being a founding member of the AIIB, India is now the second largest shareholder ([China Daily, 2015](#)). Chinese and Indian leaders exchanged visits over the years and signed various cooperation agreements, adding vigor to BCIMEC. Although there are still some difficulties in the construction of the tunnel, the chances of cooperation between major powers are great and the attitude of India is getting better. India does not exclude China's BRI in terms of policy implementation but participates in the electoral cooperation.

Geo-economically, Indian Ocean plays a Key Role

Because of its important economic tunnel and the busiest route in the world, where two-thirds of the cargo of oil is transported, Geo-economically Indian Ocean plays a central role in the world. In addition, Japan and China import 90% and 84% of their oil from the Middle East and Africa, respectively, from the Indian Ocean. With its tremendous resources and economic interests, India is arguably the most essential regional actor in the IOR. In addition, by enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation with other participating countries, New Delhi wishes to be the guardian of the Indian Ocean. In response to China's BRI, the Narendra Modi government has focused on constructive policies by addressing maritime issues at IOR. New Delhi therefore transforms its former "Look East" strategy into an "Act East" by focusing on Bay of Bengal and responsive communiqué with neighboring nations ([Anil, 2014](#)). New Delhi aims to take action against China's BRI and jobs in the Indian Ocean by promoting economic activity and growth in South China Sea, in addition to India's desire to play a leading role in the IOR.

India follows the policies of good relations with provinces of South China Sea to offend China in the region. In this way, New Delhi collaborates with Vietnamese companies in the South China Sea oil and gas exploration market. India also pursues neighboring policies in the Indian Ocean region towards its immediate neighbors Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and the Maldives and jointly pursues "blue economy" initiatives to improve the maritime growth and increase infrastructure capacity. India, on the other hand, is investing billions of dollars in Chabahar Port to establish a transport corridor that crosses Pakistan's land route to Afghanistan and Central Asia ([Amirthan, 2017](#)). The construction of the Chabahar port was identified as the competitive port against the deep port of Gwadar, which is the

central part of CPEC. In this connection, New Delhi will facilitate the port of Chabahar as a gateway to the Indian Ocean and Iran that connects Afghanistan, Central Asian countries and Europe, and to play a key role in International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) (Conrad, 2017).

In addition, a three-party agreement was signed on the construction of the international transport and economic corridor in May 2016 by India, Afghanistan and Iran. In addition, the main policy of the Government of Narendra Modi binds India through its neighboring countries in the Indian Ocean and has a desire to make India a global production center. After China's BRI declaration, India has been investing billions of dollars in construction of ports in its neighboring Indian Ocean countries. Major investments have a number of major projects, including port repairs, railway construction and reconstruction, and coastal shipping. India has participated in the construction of the first Sri Lanka LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) terminal near Colombo with Japanese and Sri Lankan companies (The Hindu business line, 2017). In addition, India is cooperating with Southeast Asian countries in its economic activities, as the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) has emerged as the most important trading destination in world. Tokyo supports India's northeast portion financially in order to achieve the Act East Policy:

Alternatively, New Delhi continues to compete with China in the Indian Ocean region as a Japanese (IOR) partner. In a joint statement, India and Japan announced the Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) concept and expressed their conclusion on the African continent to promote and develop industrial corridors and industrial networks in Asia and Africa (Bansari, 2019). To date, AAGC has seen China's increasing presence in Africa through the BRI, especially in coastal states in the IOR in Africa, as a response. In order to achieve the 'Act East Scheme,' Tokyo financially supports the northeast portion of India. The primary aim of this assistance is to facilitate the growth of infrastructure in northeastern Asia. Most importantly, the India-Myanmar-Thailand highway on Indian side will also be simplified (Mishra, 2018), which will link India with the Southeast Asian region and accelerate IOR economic connectivity. New Delhi has also partnered with Tokyo on a number of projects in the Bay of Bengal to improve infrastructure and connections aimed at opposing the BRI of China in IOR.

India is also of great interest in Quad 2.0 provinces (war names of participating countries include Australia, India, Japan and United States of America). Major democratically elected nations met at the ASEAN summit held in Manila on November 12, 2017, and discussed regional issues involving support for the "free and open Indo-Pacific" concept (Patrick & Benjamin, 2020). An overview of Quad 2.0 official meetings in response to China's growing economic and military power in the Indo-Pacific regions by participants from Australia, India, Japan and the United States of America (Le, 2019). Quad 2.0 points, however, are unclear, although the public has been facing communication and maritime security issues

in Indo-Pacific region. As a result, a strong dispute over area between China and Quad 2.0 community will increase India's importance to the IOR.

CONCLUSION

BRI China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) components appear to offer sufficient opportunities to strengthen infrastructure growth, strengthen trade cooperation, boost foreign investment and improve regional economic connectivity. The view of the Indian BRI highlights the potential challenge to New Delhi's governance in the Indian Ocean region, particularly in southern Asia. Between New Delhi and Beijing, the controversial BRI talks show a serious lack of confidence. Finally, by submitting its development model to BRI countries, China is fully convinced of the possibility of its transformation model. It was thought that a large power gap between India and China and existing security threats would enable China to grow in Indian Ocean region and neighboring Indian Ocean States. Moreover, in any cooperation agreement with China, New Delhi has always been inclined to give the worst reason. In conclusion, need for India and China to shift the focus from fragmentation to dual change, and the full importance of affirming the impartial views of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and other comparable development projects and need for comparable development projects regions especially South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region.

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