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TRADE ROUTE INITIATIVES: BEGINNING OF A NEW GAME IN POWER POLITICS

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Abstract

The recent multilateral talks regarding the new trade route ‘India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC) on the sideline of Group-20 summit have brought ahead the importance of traditional ways of inter-linkages between nation states in 21st century also. The announcement of this new project came as a surprise to many. Political analysts are busy to discuss cone and prone of this new design since then. Many of them see it as the alternative or competitor of China’s ambitious project ‘Belt and Road Initiatives’. Some other countries have also put forward another plans or projects to explore the new emerging possibilities in this region. The newly initiated ‘Developmental Route’ by Turkey could also be seen in this direction. Despite this ongoing discussion or debate about the nature and practicality of these designs, one thing is certain these traditional means of interaction have acquired the importance as the means of trade and interaction in this era of technological advancement too. Voices are also heard about the feasibilities and reliabilities regarding these initiatives in this dynamic and fragile World Order. The dynamics of this positivity were not without problems and challenges. Emerging scenario in West Asia and Middle-East, instability in Afghanistan, have made these initiatives quite complicated and dubious due to variety of nature. Besides this, many thinkers see all these initiatives cautiously due to strategic reasons. They predicate these initiatives as starting point of the new great game of the ‘power politics’ in emerging ‘World Order. Hence, the present study will deal the issue of this “Trade Route Initiatives: Beginning of a new game in Power Politics” to understand the real nature of these initiatives.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Globalization in the twenty-first century has accelerated human interactions, yet the significance of traditional routes of exchange and connectivity has not diminished. Historically, trade corridors such as the ancient Silk Route played a decisive role in shaping civilizations by enabling the movement of commodities, cultures, and ideas across continents. In today's world, these pathways are being re-imagined as instruments not only of commerce but also of strategic influence and political engagement.

A notable development in this direction has been the announcement of the **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC)** during the Group-20 summit, which generated wide interest and debate. Some observers perceive it as a counterbalance to China's ambitious **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**, while others highlight Turkey's **Developmental Route** as another competing framework for regional connectivity. Collectively, these projects underline the growing importance of transport and communication corridors in redefining economic and geopolitical landscapes.

Such initiatives, however, cannot be assessed merely as infrastructural undertakings. They embody the aspirations of emerging powers, the contestation among established ones, and the pursuit of influence in a volatile and shifting international order. The present paper seeks to examine these projects through economic, strategic, and political lenses, and to explore whether they represent opportunities for cooperation or the opening phase of a renewed struggle for dominance in global politics.

1.1 Issue

In this globalized world, technologies have closely interlinked the events, happenings and human contacts throughout the world. The world seems to be 'shrinking' and transformed into global village. But no one can take risk to underestimate the importance of traditional ways of inter-linkages. In the decade of nineties, these means of transportation and cultural exchange have also found greater importance due to economic, strategic and cultural objectives. Regional connectivity and grouping has emerged as the key feature in this era. The recent multilateral talks regarding the new trade route 'India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC) on the sideline of Group-20 summit have brought ahead the importance of traditional ways of inter-linkages between nation states in 21st century also.

1.2 The Objectives

The announcement of this new projects came as a surprise to many. Political analysts are busy to discuss cone and prone of this new design since then. The question arises, what objectives make these different stakeholders so aspire to take these projects of highly expensive and problematic in nature. It is better to understand this scenario in these three folds; economic, strategic and political aspects.

- i. Economically, in this globalized world, space and time has lost their importance. Technologies have closely interlinked the events, happenings and human contacts throughout the world. The world seems to be 'shrinking' and political, social, cultural and economic relationships among nations become more and more interlinked. Consequently, the non-polarity and uncertain world order seems to be reality in international relationship. Traditional powerhouse i.e. US and Russia has gradually losing their gripes in international arena. China, India, Brazil have been emerging new power houses in economic field with fastest growing economies in this 21st century. It is very tough task to maintain so high growth rate of 7 to 8 percent for a long time with traditional means. Surplus commodities and money demands the new areas of supply. Hence, these countries are looking for a better means of transportation and paths for the trade.

Besides this, energy security is the real issue that impels these growing economies to find new areas of enriched hydrocarbon. The Central Asia and West Asia will likely to be remain the major oil and gas producer in future also, but how to reach these areas without any roadblock will be more important. At present this competition is focused on the control over extraction and transportation of oil and gas from this region to outside world. The crucial issues involved include: the large reserves of oil and gas, claims of ownership over these resources by various countries and multiple route options for pipeline.¹

- ii. Strategically, as history reveals, the Central Asia and West Asia will remain the focal points for strategic gain in international politics. Huge natural resources and strategic location made these areas very fragile. All the major powers i.e. US, Russia, China have stakes here with one reason to other, hence always remained busy in consolidating their position. These initiatives automatically produced the space for all the stakeholders without any confrontation.
- iii. Politically, the non-polarity and uncertain world order seems to be reality in international relationship. Traditional powerhouse i.e. US and Russia has gradually losing their gripes in international arena. This pattern seems to have changed the nature of international relations and foreign policies from what it was just a few years ago. New entrant came to forefront to fill up the space. All these new power houses want to lay greater role globally and at the regional level. Countries like China, India, Turkeye have changed their substance from older one to newer one. Policy makers are giving emphasize on the vision based on

close interaction and mutual respect. Revival of these traditional paths of interaction automatically create that space of mutual respect and understanding. With the realization of these routes, people to people contact will increase and bring about unity and cooperation among them, which further consolidates and strengthen position of these countries as a major block in international rearrangements.

Despite this ongoing discussion or debate about the nature and practicality of these designs, one thing is certain these traditional means of interaction have acquired the importance as the means of trade and interaction in this era of technological advancement too.

2.0 VARIOUS INITIATIVES

This initiative of connectivity across the national boundaries is not a new phenomenon to the world to inter-connect the people and explore the prospects in economic and commercial field. In the past 'Ancient Silk Route' had the same reputation and potential as a transport access to the entire region. The ancient Silk route was not one road but many. It was actually based on a network of roads generally going east to west, but with spurs into southern Iran, the northern Eurasian steppe and south, over the Hindu Kush to the Indian subcontinent. And over time, it came to be associated not only a series of transport corridors, but also with ideas and institutions. Hence, all these projects have the roots in this ancient and historical gateway to the world. China and India have emerged as leading players and contenders in executing the serious initiatives in this direction. A brief understanding of these is very fruitful to reach out any conclusion.

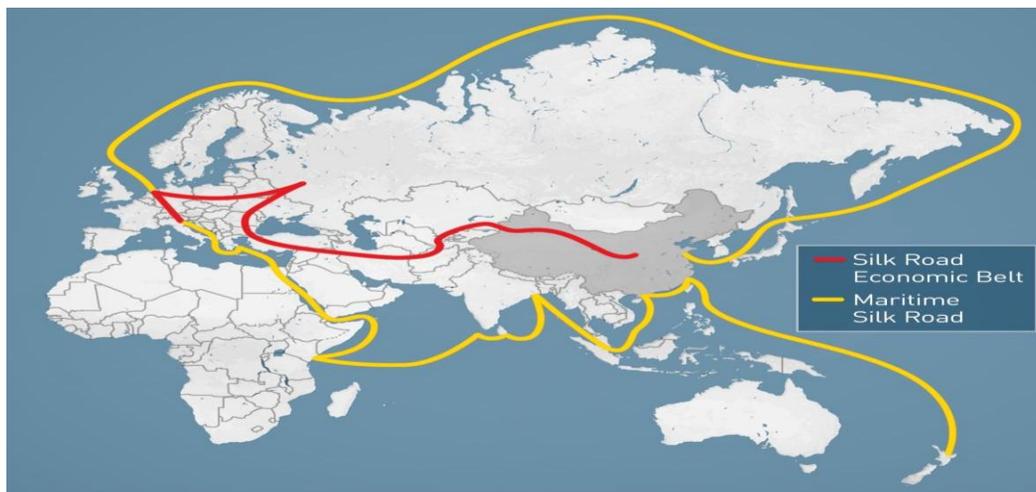
2.1 China's Initiative

China could be seen as leader that took the first step to explore possibility in this direction and reorients its policies and perspectives in a sudden pace. It has opened up its economy and now is promoting traditional means of interaction at regional level. China has given preference to regional connectivity in its foreign policy formation. The recent trial of Cargo-train by China's Railway from Beijing to Madrid, has shown its eagerness towards these objectives. Furthermore, the initiative of 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) and participation of top regional stakeholders has established it as a center of attraction throughout the globe.

2.2 One Belt One Road (OBOR) or renamed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

China's grand design in name of 'OBOR' or renamed 'BRI' could be seen as the first step to explore possibility in this direction. It is a combination of a network of roads, high-speed railways, fiber-optic lines, transcontinental submarine, optical cable projects and satellite information passageways. China also wants to establish a pipeline corridor along this Road. It will not only provide a solution of security problem but also makes maintenance of pipeline very easy. Hence, these economic interests are the main reason behind China's activism.ⁱⁱ

Inspired by this ancient Silk Route, this new project of 'OBOR' has also not only one road but as many as six routes which will include several railways line, roads, ports and other infrastructure. It is actually spread out on the networks of land roads and sea routes across the many countries from Asia to European continent, connecting the emerging ASEAN economies at one end, the China in the Centre and developed European market at the other end. The emerging consumer market in South Asia is also not left behind as it will also be connected by a sub branch. The maritime trade route will start from South China Sea to Indian Ocean and then to West Asia and Africa. It will impact 4.4 billion people and has the budget of \$1 trillion of it.ⁱⁱⁱ This project has adopted the same philosophy of ancient Silk Route behind it, As Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed it at Nazarbayev University, Astana (Kazakistan) on 07 September 2013. He declared 'All round development and people to people contacts' will be the key objectives of this project.^{iv} After that China has put forward it as the former's main agenda, not only due to historical point of view but also changing nature of International dynamics.



CBC NEWS

Source: MERICS, Mercator Institute for China Studies, 2018

China's Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI)

It has given birth to new hopes as well as some serious concerns also. As the project progressed, its ill effects began to surface. Controversy started after that. India strongly rejected and criticized all the efforts that are monopolistic in nature. Geopolitical and economic factors made 'OBOR' quite complicated and dubious due to variety of reason. Main stake holder country like India has shown some serious reservation in this initiative. The other countries like USA, Japan, Australia and European world although have shown interest in the beginning yet all of countries are reluctant in the joining of this project. Even country like Pakistan who emerged as a close associate in the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a sub-branch of this project, felt the heat at domestic level time to time. Hence, a strategic dimension is going to emerge in this region. Some scholars have put forward some serious questions on the Chinese intention regarding this project. They even see it as an instrument of power politics and declare that a newer version of power politics is eminent in Asian Continent. As Harish K. Thakur observed that the chief objective of China behind the CPEC is 'to strategically undermine the position of India by having access to the disputed territories of Jammu and Kashmir'. China has even made to rethink by this opposition to re-christened this concept as " Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" as 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) indicating the hegemonic posture of 'One Nation' in this globalised world in which 'many belts and many roads' exist. Hence, the success of this grand project is not as easy as it looks like. For a better understanding of this issue, it is pertinent to give a close realistic look on China's interests in this project.

II. Indian Initiatives

India is on the brink of fastest economic growth and striving hard to achieve the goal of \$5 billion economy. Simultaneously, energy demand is rising rapidly day by day with growing economy at an average annual rate of 7 to 8%. This emerging economic alignment impels India to look for reliable long-term source of energy to boost up its economy. Russia, Central Asia, West Asia and Middle East have the potentials to meet out India's energy demand, but how to get easy access there will be more important. India is not having direct physical link with these countries. That's why India is trying hard to make arrangements for direct access in these areas with likeminded countries. The efforts of revival of ancient trade routes i.e. Silk Route, Spice route, North-South corridor, renovation of Chabahar port in Iran and connect it to Zarang and Delram in Afghanistan and further to Uzbekistan, and latest envisaged India-Middle East Europe corridor (IMEEC) on the sideline of Group-20 summit could be seen in this direction. The laying of TAPI gas pipeline initiative could also be seen in the same direction. If all these initiatives could have been materialized fully, it will present great opportunities for India to get fulfill its rising energy demand. A brief outlook of all these initiatives will clarify the real emerging situation in this direction.

A. TAPI GAS PIPELINE

Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project had assumed significance as an alternative source of gas in the beginning of 21st century. These four major stakeholders of this project had signed the Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement (GPFA) in December 2010. Turkmenistan had agreed to supply 27 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year from its Daulatabad gas field to Afghanistan-Pakistan-India through 1680 km long pipeline project. vii But this much talked and awaited project has lost its credibility for the time being due to Pakistan's anti India campaign, deteriorating security condition in its Northwest Frontier region, Afghanistan' local conflict and destabilized political set up. Both the later countries have been emerged major conflict areas since then, the security concerns put this project of high stakes on hold. Therefore, practical implementation of the project is still to be understood as a mere dream. viii



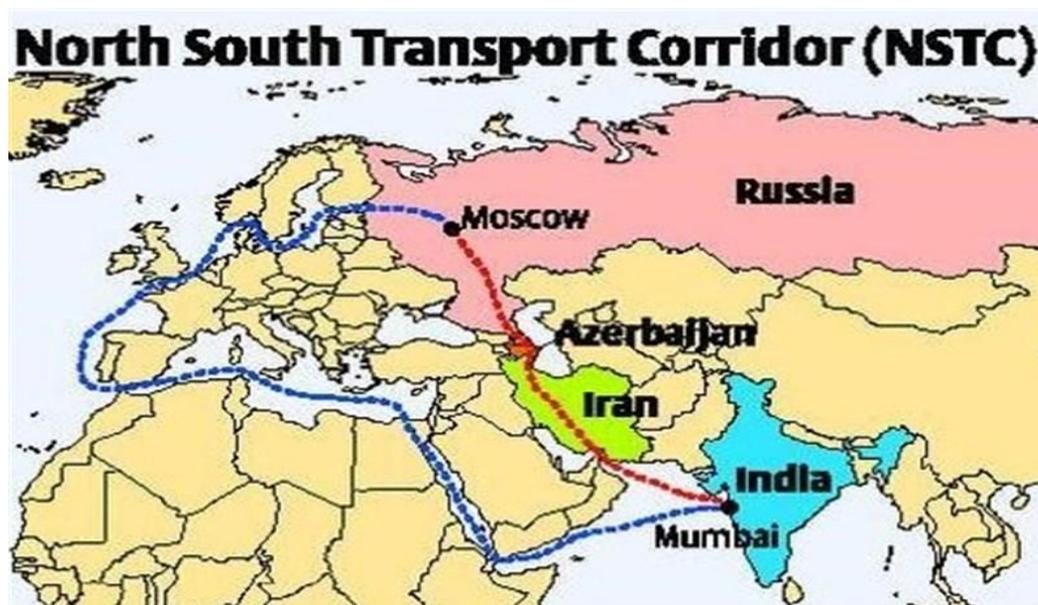
TAPI Gas Pipeline

Source:

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B. NORTH-SOUTH CORRIDOR

North-south transport Corridor came to existence after multi levels agreements. The main agreement was signed among India, Iran and Russia in September 2000 and earlier through a tripartite transport agreement among India, Iran and Turkmenistan in 1995. It envisages the utilization of a land- cum-sea route leading up to Turkmenistan. For instance, goods from Bombay can be shipped to the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and then can be sent by rail to Sarakhs on the Iranian- Turkminstan border along, what has been described as the new silk road. The goods could reach interior Turkmenistan through Tajden and Mary.ix The use of that corridor, which extended beyond Turkminstan, can spin off trade benefits, not only with the CARs, but also with the entire former Soviet Union and beyond. In its final shape North-South trade corridor originates in Russia, provides a corridor for trade through Central Asia and then proceeds through Iran to India.x Another initiative of 'Trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan' that will commence from Chabahar port to Melak region in south east to Zarang in Afghanistan and proceed to Delram and further to Uzbekistan suffered setback and put on hold for the time being after Taliban return in Afghanistan.



North South Transport Corridor

Source:

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3.0 TRILATERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA, IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

Under the first India-Central Asia Dialogue, a Track-II initiative organized on 12-13 June 2012 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, India launched 'Connect Central Asia policy'. The main objective of this policy is to strengthen people-to-people engagement and gain direct access to this land locked region. Trilateral agreement was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan to connect Central Asia through Chabahar Port in Iran. The route will commence from Chabahar Port and pass through the Melak region in south east of Iran to Zarang in Afghanistan and proceed to Delram and further to Uzbekistan. According to this agreement Iran has accepted to build a new transit route that connects its Melak region in the southeast to Zarang in Afghanistan. India would then build up a 210 km road to connect Zaranj to Delaram in Afghanistan. Related to this, Iran, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have signed an agreement on transport corridor. This route will commence from Uzbekistan's Termez province and will proceed to Iran via Afghanistan's Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat and lead to Iran's Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar port. India and Iran have further signed a protocol to connect Chahbahar to the nationwide Iranin railroad network, aiming to boost



TRILATERAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN INDIA, IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN

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4.0 THE LATEST IMEEC

The latest India-Middle East-Europe (IMEEC) opens up new transport routes and avenues for cooperation between member countries on technology, design, finance and regulatory standards as announced during in this prestigious G-20 meeting. IMEEC is an agreed name for a trans-continental land Sea Route that will connect India to Middle East than proceed to Europe and then to US. A project, the plan under this route is to transport goods from Indian ports to Fujairah in the UAE by ship, and from there move the containers by train to Haifa in Israel via Sadie Arabia. From Haifa, the containers will move to Europe with Italy, France, the UK and the US having already joined the alliance. All the stakeholders have agreed to convene a high level meeting to develop an action plan within sixty days to make it reality. This is the key point that for a success of these types of initiatives some basic parameters are to be framed first. Hence, this effort would trigger a powerful momentum with accompanying flows of imports and exports, tourists and people to people interaction, requiring viable means to these types of activities. And, it will not push countries into debt trap as collaborative and inclusive in nature, but final draft is yet to come. The deteriorating condition in West Asia in shadow of ongoing war between Hamas and Israel has put some serious questions about its practicality.



Proposed IMEE Corridor

Source:

<https://www.bing.com/images/search?view=detailV2&ccid=J5cYSXcE&id=9F60D1E2CB2B445D4C118F2B23B6AB B219946C99&thid=OIP.J5cYSXcE9251wLOdJCH5cgHaEK&mediaurl=https%3a%2f%2fwww.euractiv.com%2fwp-content%2fuploads%2fsites%2f2%2f2023%2f09%2fMiddle-corridor-800x450.jpeg&exph=450&expw=800&q=roposed+IMEC+MAP&simid=608017836121000036&FORM=IRPRST&ck=0AD025D69B6589C9AEFC16FCF07E1EAB&selectedIndex=25&ajaxhist=0&ajaxserp=0>

5.0 THE POLITICS

The dynamics of international relations are witnessing sudden changes in this twenty first century. The recession in US economy has opened the gate for new entities to take advance position on world stage in this globalize world. Shift of global politics from Euro-Atlantic to Asia-Pacific and now Indo-Pacific led to the building of new kinds of permutation and combination as the vital instruments in enhancing national interests in this period. These initiatives of trade routes have also been seen very closely by the scholars all around the world. They have put forward some serious questions on the intentions regarding these projects. They even see it as an instrument of power politics and declare that a newer version of power politics is eminent in Asian Continent. China has even made to rethink by this opposition to re-christened this concept as "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" as 'One Belt One Road' (OBOR) indicating the hegemonic posture of 'One Nation' in this globalize world in which 'many belts and many roads' exist.^{xiii} Of other major powers This game is not as simple as it seems, the stakes of other major powers cannot be ruled out. The energy resources in the adjoining regions of these projects have always been remained the bone of contestation. Hence all these players are also busy to make access here by using various tools to secure their share of uninterrupted energy supply thereby making the region strategically woeful. Trade routes provides the opportunity to major powers to cooperate in materializing these projects. Thus a scenario of competition and cooperation has emerged consequentially thereby prepare a fertile land for new great game of competitive-influence-building measures among all the stakeholders including USA, Russia, China, and other Western Countries. India has also no left behind in this emerging scenario.

To sum up, Asian resurgence has changed the parameters of emerging world order in this new 21st century. China and India has emerged as major players in international relations in this era. Policy makers of both countries are busy in transforming policy making and its orientation. Both the countries have been working on new design of its foreign policy. These projects of trade routes initiatives as the combination of foreign policy and economic development strategy, are emerging as new innovative and strategic tools in international scenario. Economies of both India and China are also growing rapidly that seeks markets and guarantee energy supplies to sustain its growth. Both are making effort to gain access to reliable long-term sources of energy. This scenario brought India directly in a competing position with China. It creates problem and suspicion in the mind of policy makers of both countries. Hence, a strategic dimension is going to emerge in global politics.

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THE PREDICAMENT OF WOMEN IN INDIAN-ENGLISH WRITINGS: SOME REFLECTIONS DURING THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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standards, dilemma, dignity

Abstract

From depiction of India's struggle for Independence and feeling of nationalism to showing the social reality in the Post-Independence era including hunger and despair of village life, religious myths and realities – the journey of Indian-English writing has been quite long and wide. In the post-independence era, the main themes have been man-woman relationship, socio-political consciousness and the conflict between scientific growth and traditional values. The present paper proposes to bring out the predicament of women as depicted in Indian-English writings during the second half of the Twentieth Century. The focus has been on the condition of women, their dilemma and struggle in the wake of changing times and their response to the Indian social milieu as portrayed through different writers.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The journey of Indian-English writings has been quite long and wide. Covering diverse issues and multiple themes, it has become representative of the age, class, country. In the post-independence era, the main themes of Indian-English writers have been man-woman relationship, socio-political consciousness and the conflict between scientific growth and traditional values. Referring to the writings of this period, Ghosh opines, "...the novelists of the post-independence period have succeeded in projecting the growing trends of change in attitude, outlook and aspirations of a nation committed to ameliorate the lot of crores of people living below the poverty line, subjected to economic constraints and orthodox social obligations."ⁱ It is a fact that down the ages a woman's life has been a series of ordeals. She is considered "to be an embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffering, humanity, faith, knowledge."ⁱⁱ Despite the fact that several laws and policies have been framed and implemented to support and uplift women, gender bias has been observed in terms of sharing responsibilities at home, at workplace or in case of women working at the top positions. Though woman today has become more career oriented and has been playing a vital role in the nation's growth; yet she still has to assert a lot to overcome the orthodox mindset. To quote Shashi Deshpande, "Gender is undoubtedly one of the most important factors of our lives. ...Our lives are, to a great extent, shaped by our gender... I also realised that in a world dominated by male values, while the class and the class-struggle are taken seriously, the gender struggle is not."ⁱⁱⁱ

Indian-English writers have dealt with women's issues in numerous ways. Many of them have brought out the pain and misery women undergo due to dual standards prevalent in society for a long time. Others bring out the restlessness and the existential struggle faced by women because of their assigned roles and sense of self and space. "The image of a caged, cribbed and confined woman"^{iv} has been delineated by many Indian novelists through their works. R.K. Narayan, Anita Desai, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praraw Jhabwala, Kamla Das, Vijay Tendulkar, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Gita Hariharan, Namita Gokhale, Arundhati Roy and many others have tried to establish women's identity in a patriarchal society. Their works emphasize women's freedom in respect of societal customs, traditions and value systems.

R. K. Narayan made a distinguished contribution to Indian-English writings with his voluminous work including fourteen novels and more than 200 stories. Centred at the fictional town Malgudi, Narayan's writings encompass Indian customs, traditions, value system, middle class moralities and status of women in contemporary times. *The Guide* (1958) by Narayan is a seminal work which redefines the position of women in Indian society. The protagonist, Rosie, struggles between traditional norms and her desire for liberation. Born in a family of temple-dancers, she searches for love firstly in her marriage with Marco and later in her relation with Raju, the guide. She wants to fly and enjoy life like a bird. To quote, "She ran like a child from plant to plant with cries of joy, while the man looked on with no emotion. Anything that interested her seemed to irritate him."^v A strong-willed woman, Rosie resists "a single ideological position defined by the male world. She moves within and beyond the physical world to discover inner power and hidden essences."^{vi} She challenges her socially stigmatized identity by acquiring a university degree in economics. Her decision to marry Marco, a man of academic interests, is primarily motivated by a desire to come out of the Devadasi fold and lead a respectable life. But she becomes a victim of patriarchal hegemony. Even after marriage, she doesn't get love and care from her husband which becomes one of the reasons to leave him, "I'd have preferred any kind of mother-in-law if it had meant one real, live husband" (*The Guide* 85). The interests of husband and wife are far apart. Marco hates her dancing skills and equates it with prostitution. Whereas he is passionate about ruin-collecting activities, Rosie is passionate about her dance. Defying cultural traditions, Rosie moves with Raju to pursue her passion. Raju supports her all along defying the traditions of his family, but with Rosie's success as a dancer, a gap starts emerging in their relations. Gradually, Rosie becomes tired of the mechanical life of giving performances round the clock. She feels herself like "a bull yoked to an oil-crusher that keep going round and round, in a circle, without a beginning or an end" (*The Guide* 76), like "one of those parrots in a cage taken around village fairs, or a performing monkey..." (*The Guide* 203). When she attains her height as a dancer, Raju starts using her art for monetary gains. Raju wanted to earn maximum money out of her dance performance. In his words "My philosophy was that while it lasted the maximum money had to be squeezed out." (*The Guide* 195). Despite his help in every possible way, he is unable to understand Rosie's emotional self. Their relationship finally fails due to Raju's over-possessive nature and emotional vacuum felt by Rosie. *The Guide* explores the tension between tradition and modernity. Here reference to another novel *The Dark Room* (1938) by Narayan is also important. Though there is a gap of twenty years in both the works, both offer valuable insights into Indian society and culture and deal with themes of woman's identity and societal expectations. *The Dark Room* focuses on the constraints placed on women in Indian society and deals with "the traditional male attitude towards women, which treats them as dolls, mere puppets; not as human beings."^{vii} Savitri, the protagonist of *The Dark Room*, remains a passive sufferer all through her life tolerating her husband's insensitivity and relation with some other woman for the sake of her family. Through her, the "inferior status of women has been pinpointed again and again"^{viii} as the novel symbolises her helplessness and deep mental agony. Rosie, on the other hand, is strong enough to defy tradition and move ahead by making her own decisions. Whereas Savitri breaks away temporarily to revolt against her husband's unjustified ways, Rosie, in her struggle to lead a respectable life, doesn't compromise either with her husband or with her lover. Passing through difficult phases she is finally able to realise her dream of establishing her identity through art. Though portrayed as a strong character, she too craves for love and belongingness all through her life just as Savitri.

The theme of women's search for belongingness has beautifully been depicted by Anita Desai. She is one of those writers who gave a new dimension to the theme of man-woman relationship as her novels are generally existentialist studies of individuals. To quote, "Marital discord, inability or unwillingness to communicate, the

agonies of sensitive and sometimes neurotic protagonist living in an insensitive world- these themes constitute the focus of attention of her fiction.”^x Due to hypersensitive nature, her characters are unable to connect to their partners which results in husband-wife alienation. In her first novel-Cry the Peacock published in 1964, Desai depicts the fragmentation of the protagonist’s identity. Maya longs for her identity realized in terms of marital harmony but never succeeds. The same sort of problem is faced by Monisha in her marriage to Jiban in a conservative Hindu family in *Voices in the City* (1965). It is again the problem of incompatibility where there is lack of intimacy or sharing between a husband and wife. The novel deals with the problem of self in a metropolitan city Calcutta. She feels a terrible isolation in the joint family at her in-law’s house. She has no sharing with anyone, not even with Jiban. “Her husband’s inability to fathom her need as well as the general hard-headedness of his family members contributes to her isolation.”^x She has to suffer more and more because of the oppressive environment of the city. With a thick quilt of pungent blue smoke, Monisha sees “another face of this devil city, a face... a dull, vacant, hopeless face. The rickshaw coolie, the street sweeper, the tanner, the beggar child with his limbs cut off ... they share one face, one expression of tiredness, such overwhelming tiredness...”^{xi} The charge of theft in her own house is a big blow to her self-esteem. “...I passed on my way up to the room. They didn’t allow me to enter it... Jiban’s mother called out. ‘Money has been stolen, you know, Jiban’s money... I will not have a thief in my house. Who is to tell who this thief is? After all you were the only person who were in the room all day.’” (*Voices* 137). Her barrenness causes her humiliation and embarrassment. She feels insulted when her husband’s family talks and discusses about her organs and the reasons she could not have a child. “...my ovaries, my tubes, all my recesses moist with blood, washed in blood, laid open, laid bare to their scrutiny.” (*Voices* 113). She feels strangled as she has no freedom to talk to anyone, not even to her brother. She becomes lifeless and passive. Unable to relate to anyone, she finds her life meaningless and gradually becomes hysterical. The repression of desires leads her to nervous breakdown and she turns to painful death by burning herself. To quote, “Monisha’s tortuous journey towards her horrible death presents her spiritual and physical transformation in black, mourning colours. Monisha is transformed from a quiet, sensitive, mild, self-centred, beautiful girl into a barren, neurotic, diary-writing woman.”^{xii} Thus, Anita Desai has depicted the interior call of Monisha who has always self-negated her desire of self-fulfilment. The title of the novel also refers to so many voices to be heard in the city that one’s voice goes unheard and life looks meaningless, futile, unchanged and unimproved.

Another writer who gives a realistic picture of women in contemporary society is Vijay Tendulkar, a Marathi playwright. In his play, *Silence! The Court is in Session* (1967) he exposes the dual standards of society and brings out the trauma of a woman in the name of social norms. Leela Benare, the protagonist, undergoes pain and humiliation caused by her fellow colleagues, who intentionally target her in the name of mock trial. Benare is a self-assertive woman who wants to live life on her own terms. “...My will is my own. My wishes are my own. No one can kill those—no one! I’ll do what I like with myself and my life! I’ll decide.”^{xiii} A popular and dedicated teacher in her early thirties, she dominates her associates belonging to Sonar Moti tenements Progressive Association Amature theatre troupe in Bombay. As a teacher, she earns the respect of her students and is committed to her profession. As the play proceeds, she becomes the target of her fellow colleagues who cannot tolerate her open lifestyle and don’t accept her way of living. The play depicts how she is trapped by her associates. In the name of a mock trial, her professional/ personal life is inter-mingled and questioned. To quote, “Just look at the way she behaves. ... Should there be no limit to how freely a woman can behave with a man? An unmarried woman?” (*Silence* 46). The writer uses satire and irony to highlight the hollowness of society. All the unethical things take place in ‘court’: false evidence is created, allegations are framed and when Benare wants to speak a few lines, she is constantly cautioned by the judge to be silent as ‘the court is in session’. She is made the prime accused as the unwed mother of his illegitimate child whereas Prof. Damle is summoned merely as a witness during the trial. Further, there is no trace of Prof. Damle who remains absent throughout the play. Her silent gaze and stiffness like a block of stone symbolises the pain she passes through. The word ‘Silence’ in the title of the play exposes the narrow mentality of the society which sets different yardsticks for a man and a woman and rarely supports a woman who wants to live life on her own terms. Through Benare’s soliloquy, some important issues in our society have been raised. If she is punished for violating the traditions, why not Damle? How pure are the people who pronounce their judgement? What’s the meaning of ‘freedom’ for a woman? One thing noteworthy is that Benare bravely fights her battle against social conventions and therefore becomes victorious even in her defeat. Her struggle not only exposes the hypocritical attitude of the male dominated society but makes her earn readers’ sympathy and love.

Rama Mehta, an Indian sociologist and writer, records the impact of changing social conditions and education on values and attitudes of women. Her novel *Inside the Haveli* (1977), which won the Sahitya Akademi Award, is about a woman’s struggle to achieve her identity. By exploring the inner self of the protagonist symbolising ‘new woman,’ the author brings out the unease and restlessness of a middle class girl-educated-yet confined to constraints posed by the conservative society. It analyses the family structure and tradition as the key elements of patriarchal social organisation and depicts the struggle of the protagonist for balance between herself and the newly assumed role as a bride in a conservative family of Udaipur. Geeta’s struggle inside the haveli and her strength to overcome the fears forms the major part of the novel. After her marriage, the sudden change of atmosphere, family tradition and values creates confusion in her mind. The irrelevance of customs and traditions being blindly followed in the haveli makes her disturbed. She longs to express her feelings of love and appreciation for her father-in-law with whom she is not allowed to speak. “Even after seven years I am a stranger to those that are mine.”^{xiv} However, with time a change is observed. She starts asking her husband to buy books without caring of what others think. She gives vent to her feelings by starting a school inside the haveli. Holding classes for illiterate women, teaching children from the neighbourhood, spending time with poor children give a new meaning to her life. While early in the book, Geeta seriously considers leaving her husband if he does not want to move out of the Haveli, in the due course of time, she begins to experience pride and affection for the haveli. “I don’t want to leave Udaipur now...Where else in the world would I get this kind of love and concern” (*Haveli* 137). The third part of the novel depicts how with the passage of time, winds of change start flowing in the haveli. Geeta gets her place as an important member of family, starts

understanding her in-laws and to some extent, succeeds in moulding the haveli customs too. Her father-in-law also says, "I am proud of Binniji." (Haveli 158). To quote, "... To begin with Geeta and her in-laws stand at two hands of a straight line. By the time the book concludes. both parties have made a conscious effort to come closer and try to understand, tolerate and appreciate each other's views and needs."^{xv} In this context, Darshana Trivedi remarks, "Geeta accepts the tradition, but preserves her own voice within the given social framework."^{xvi}16

From the ongoing discussions, it has been revealed that Indian-English writers have made a significant contribution in bringing out the realities about women in our society. Most of them bring out the conflict their protagonists undergo-whether it is the conflict between husband and wife or age old traditions and progressive outlook or with one's own self - the focus of the writers has been to look into the social and cultural practices which deny women their rights to live as a human being in a male dominated society. One thing common is that all the writers want women to be recognised as individuals, to be accepted as equals.

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JAGIRDARI SYSTEM AND REVENUE CRISES IN THE SUBAH OF DELHI UNDER THE LATER MUGHALS (1707-1757)

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Abstract

In the early eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire gradually faced a crisis in its political power and economic structure. The death of Aurangzeb in 1707 not only marked the end of a single ruler but also initiated a long-term instability within the empire. In particular, the Subah of Delhi, which was the political, economic, and cultural center of the Mughal Empire, was particularly hard-hit by this crisis. The economic structure of the Subah of Delhi was primarily based on the Jagirdari system, which began to weaken due to factors such as the growing political ambitions of jagir holders, irregularities in revenue collection, administrative corruption, and a lack of government control. Between 1707 and 1757, the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi faced not only administrative disruptions but also profoundly affected the revenue collection process. The centralization of power and wealth by jagir holders for their own benefit, irregularities in revenue payment, and excessive pressure on peasants became the root causes of economic instability. This directly impacted agricultural production, urban industry, crafts, and trade. Consequently, the economic stability of the Subah of Delhi began to weaken and the social fabric began to disintegrate. This paper analyzes how these weaknesses in the Jagirdari system were not merely an administrative crisis but also became one of the primary causes of the decline of Mughal power. In this study, we will also attempt to understand how changes in the jagir system, revenue crisis, political instability, and social influences intersected to accelerate the decline of Mughal rule in the Subah of Delhi.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The journey of Indian-English writings has been quite long and wide. Covering diverse issues and multiple themes, it has become representative of the age, class, country. In the post-independence era, the main themes of Indian-English writers have been man-woman relationship, socio-political consciousness and the conflict between

The Jagirdari system formed one of the central pillars of Mughal administrative and revenue organization. Originating during the Delhi Sultanate and refined under Akbar's rule, it became a crucial mechanism for ensuring both imperial control and military strength. Through this system, Mansabdars were granted temporary rights to collect revenue from specific lands (jagirs) in exchange for military and administrative services. This arrangement created a direct link between the emperor's authority and the provincial elite.

However, over time, this system began to weaken due to arbitrary distribution of jagirs, frequent transfers of jagirdars, factional court politics, and growing local autonomy. Nowhere were these tensions more visible than in the Subah of Delhi — the empire's political and administrative heart. As the central power weakened after Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Jagirdari system gradually transformed, creating revenue instability, administrative inefficiency, and local power struggles.

This article examines the **evolution, functioning, and transformation** of the Jagirdari system in Delhi Subah, and analyses how its internal weaknesses contributed to the **decline of Mughal power in the eighteenth century**. By exploring its administrative structure, revenue mechanisms, and political implications, this study aims to understand why a system that once strengthened the empire eventually became a source of its disintegration.

2.0 Background of the Jagirdari System

The most important pillar of the Mughal administration was the Mansabdari and Jagirdari system. The emperor granted Jagirs to his Mansabdars in exchange for their military and administrative duties. Jagirs meant an official's temporary right to the revenues of a particular territory. The Jagirdars duty was to collect fixed revenue from that territory and, in return, to support his military and administrative expenses. This land was not a permanent possession but a temporary appointment.

The Jagirdari system was an important part of the Mansabdari system. It developed well during the reign of Akbar. At that time, the land across the empire was divided into two main divisions: Khalisa and Jagir. Khalisa was the land whose revenue went directly to the emperor, while Jagir was the land assigned to Mansabdars in exchange for their service. While some subsequent rulers maintained this system, by the time of Aurangzeb, it had experienced numerous changes and weaknesses. While Akbar had maintained a systematic distribution of Jagirs, the arbitrary division of Jagirs, frequent transfers, and court politics under subsequent emperors destabilized the system. Even during Aurangzeb's long reign, this system failed to remain completely strong that escalated the political and economic weakness.

This system remained somewhat regulated during Aurangzeb's long reign. However, after him, when the empire came under the rule of weak rulers, the flaws of the Jagirdari system became apparent. The arbitrary division of Jagirs, frequent transfers, and court factionalism made the system unstable.ⁱ

3.0 Nature of the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi.

The Jagirdari system was a form of administration and revenue distribution in the Subah of Delhi. Instead of paying cash salaries, officials (Jagirdars) were granted the right to collect revenue from specific lands. This right did not equate to ownership of the land, but rather to receive the income from that land. This system evolved from the Iqta system of the Delhi Sultanate and was further strengthened under Mughal rule. Jagirdars handled local administration and revenue, but were supervised by state officials such as the Diwan and Amin. Under this system, peasants generally retained their hereditary rights. The Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi was complex because it was the main political center of the empire. It posed several significant problems. Often, jagirs were granted to powerful nobles and factions within the court, by passing qualified officials, leading to inequality and irregularity in the distribution of jagirs. Nazir Khan and Khan Khana are examples of this high-ranking court officials who were granted large jagirs based on court politics rather than their administrative experience.

Jagirs were often distributed as a bargain between powerful factions or leaders within the court to maintain their support. This prevented many capable officials with experience in managing land and revenue from receiving jagirs that increased corruption. Jagirdars were frequently transferred, depriving them of the opportunity to establish stable land tenure. They extorted high taxes from farmers simply to reap quick profits. This increased pressure and exploitation on farmers. The lack of security and migration of farmers often led to land becoming barren, further exacerbating the difficulties in revenue collection. Thus, the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi became an example of exploitation and chaos.

4.0 Changes in the Jagirdari system

In the early eighteenth century, the Jagirdari system formed the backbone of the Mughal Empire's administrative and revenue system. The Jagirdars' primary duty was to collect revenue from their territories and provide a portion of it for the army and administration.ⁱⁱ After 1707, the nature of jagirs underwent a marked change. While

permanent jagirs had previously been prevalent, temporary jagirs now began to proliferate. As a result, the rights of Jagirdars became unstable and their political position weakened.ⁱⁱⁱ Simultaneously, the jagirs were divided into smaller areas, making the Jagirdars' power regional and independent of the central government. The revenue collection system also underwent significant changes during this period. The Jagirdars' right to directly collect revenue from the land gradually declined, and the contract system became prevalent in its place.^{iv} The role of the Jagirdars also changed during this period. Previously, they were merely revenue officials and military officers, but now they began to establish political dominance in their territories. Many Jagirdars began to act as independent rulers and directly interfere in Delhi's political affairs.^v The result was that the Jagirdari system altered the balance of power between the center and the Subah's. The increasing independence of the Jagirdars weakened the central government and led to political instability in the Subah of Delhi. The main reasons for the changes included wars of succession and power struggles, weaknesses in the central administration, financial pressures due to frequent military campaigns and foreign invasions, the Jagirdars' desire for autonomy, and local rebellions. These factors accelerated the transformation of the Jagirdari system and made it difficult to maintain it. As a result, the transformation of the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi created instability in the revenue system, increased the independence of the Jagirdars, and weakened the hold of central power. This change began to play a decisive role in weakening the unity of the empire.^{vi}

5.0 Revenue crisis due to the Jagirdari system

Changes in the structure of this system and instability in its operation led to a revenue crisis. The primary reason was the temporary nature of jagirs. Between 1707 and 1757, the number of permanent jagirs declined, and jagirs began to be granted on a temporary basis. This led Jagirdars to collect revenue solely for short-term gain and to neglect agricultural improvement or long-term investment, which reduced land productivity and affected revenue collection.^{vii} Furthermore, this period saw decentralization in revenue collection. Jagirdars had the right to directly collect revenue, but by the mid-18th century, they used this authority to expand their military and political dominance. This led to the prevalence of the contract system, which led to a lack of transparency and control in revenue collection. This decentralization created instability in the revenue system and weakened the financial capacity of the central government. The growing independence and selfishness of the Jagirdars were also important causes of the revenue crisis. They did not limit their authority to revenue collection alone, but established political dominance in their territories. Many Jagirdars broke free from the control of the central government and began to function as independent entities in their territories. This situation led to revenue collection being shaped by their personal interests, affecting both the quantity and quality of revenue.^{viii} Additionally, administrative weaknesses and corruption intensified the crisis. The Jagirdari system distributed revenue collection tasks across multiple levels, increasing the potential for corruption among Jagirdars, their subordinate officials, and contractors. This system fostered revenue evasion and under-collection in the Subah of Delhi, adversely impacting the government treasury.

Finally, the impact of military campaigns and invasions was also significant. During 1707–1757, the Subah of Delhi faced repeated internal rebellions and external attacks. Jagirdars had to spend money to maintain their military forces, and to do so, they increased revenue collection. In the process, additional taxes were imposed on peasants, which affected agricultural production and led to a long-term revenue crisis.^{ix}

6.0 The role of the Jagirdari system in the decline of Mughal power

In the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire was going through political, administrative, and economic crises. The Jagirdari system, the backbone of Mughal rule, played a significant role in this decline. After Aurangzeb's death in 1707, the Jagirdari system underwent several changes, weakening central authority and leading to the empire's disintegration. Originally, the Jagirdari system aimed to allow the state to own its land and grant Jagirdars the right to collect revenue from that land. However, after 1707, several weaknesses within the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi became apparent. The most significant change was the temporary nature of jagirs. The practice of granting temporary jagirs instead of permanent jagirs increased, leaving Jagirdars unable to implement long-term reforms. They collected revenue only for short-term gain, leading to a decline in land productivity and impacting revenue collection.^x

By around 1720, the entire Jagirdari system had begun to collapse. The government's fixed revenue (jama) was not being collected from the fields (hasil). In the words of historian Athar Ali, "this disjunction between assessment and realization" was a fundamental weakness of late Mughal revenue administration. ^{xi}When the jagirdars were unable to collect their promised revenue, they resorted to coercion against the landlords and peasants. Conflicts broke out with those landlords who resisted. Many villages were deserted, agriculture declined, and the village economy deteriorated completely. It became increasingly difficult for the royal diwan to grant new jagirs, as most of the land was either degraded or no longer fertile. Furthermore, the nobles began to refuse to be sent to barren and unsettled areas. As the Jagirdari system weakened, the emperor was no longer able to trust his mansabdars. Many nobles were left with no substantial estates, so they maintained their armies merely for the sake of name. As a result, the imperial army weakened, and with it, the power of the Mughal government also began to decline.

The process of revenue collection also became decentralized. Jagirdars were no longer merely revenue officials; they expanded their authority to include political dominance. In the Subah of Delhi, Jagirdars used their position to divert revenue to their own interests and, in many cases, stopped remitting it to the emperor. This weakened the central government's financial power and led to a breakdown in administrative control.^{xii} Furthermore, the growing independence of the Jagirdars weakened Mughal authority. Jagirdars not only collected revenue but also amassed political power in their territories. Many Jagirdars ruled their territories as independent rulers. This disrupted the balance of power between the central government and the Jagirdars in the Subah of Delhi, and the

Jagirdars hindered the consolidation of the empire. Corruption and administrative weakness further deepened the problems of this system. Revenue collection in the Jagirdari system occurred at multiple levels, increasing the potential for corruption among Jagirdars and their subordinates. This led to revenue evasion and reduced collection in the Subah of Delhi, depleting the emperor's treasury.^{xiii} Military campaigns and external attacks also complicated the situation. During 1707–1757, the Subah of Delhi repeatedly grappled with internal rebellions and external invasions. Jagirdars had to increase revenue collection to maintain their military forces. This often resulted in additional taxes being imposed on peasants, which affected agricultural production and exacerbated the revenue crisis in the long run.^{xiv}

Between 1707 and 1757, the Jagirdari system in the Subah of Delhi gradually began to break down. This breakdown was a sign of the weakening power of the Mughal emperors. During the regime of Great Akbar, this system was very intelligently designed officers (Mansabdars) were granted land to serve the state and maintain an army. However, this system later became a jumble. Jagirdars began to obtain by threat excessive revenues from their lands, distressing farmers, and villages began to fall apart. The number of officers increased so much that it became difficult to provide jagirs to everyone. Much land was leased out (Ijara), where contractors began to force money from farmers. This made life difficult for the people.

Historian Irfan Habib argues that the Jagirdari crisis “represented not merely an administrative malfunction but a structural contradiction of the Mughal economy itself.”^{xv} As long as the emperor was strong, the system functioned well. But as soon as the emperor's grip weakened, everything fell apart. Its effects were clearly visible in the Delhi province like Many villages were deserted, Landlords rebelled in their own territories, Governors had no money left to govern, and peasants began facing starvation. By the Third Battle of Panipat (1761), this entire system had collapsed. Petty chieftains and powerful individuals now ruled the Delhi province according to their own whims.

Thus, the zamindari system, once the Mughal state's strength, became its greatest weakness. It depleted the treasury, disenfranchised the peasantry, and led to political chaos. These circumstances ultimately led to the rise of the British and the end of Mughal rule.

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E-GOVERNANCE IN INDIA: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EFFECTIVE PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

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Abstract

E-governance has emerged as an important transformative tool for improving public service delivery in India, offering the potential to enhance transparency, reduce corruption, and streamline administrative processes. However, the successful implementation of e-governance in India is fraught with numerous challenges, including inadequate digital infrastructure, high levels of digital illiteracy, and institutional resistance. This paper explores the challenges and opportunities associated with e-governance in India, focusing on its role in public service delivery. By analyzing key government initiatives such as the Digital India programme and the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), the paper examines how e-governance can address the administrative inefficiencies that have long plagued India's public sector. Drawing on various reports and scholarly works, including those from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, UNESCO, and academic experts, the paper highlights both the potential of e-governance to empower citizens and the barriers to its effective implementation. The findings suggest that while e-governance holds immense promise, its full potential can only be realized through sustained efforts to overcome technological, political, and societal obstacles. The paper concludes by offering policy recommendations to enhance the scope and impact of e-governance in India, emphasizing the importance of digital literacy, infrastructure development, and a collaborative approach between the government and private sector. Ultimately, e-governance in India represents both a challenge and an opportunity in the quest for more efficient, transparent, and citizen-centered governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

E-governance refers to the application of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance the delivery of government services, improve transparency, and enable better communication between the government and citizens. In the context of India, e-governance holds the promise of transforming public administration by making it more efficient, accessible, and responsive to the needs of a vast and diverse population. However, despite significant strides made through initiatives like Digital India and the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), the country faces persistent challenges that hinder the widespread adoption and effectiveness of e-governance solutions.

The importance of e-governance in the modern age cannot be overstated. With a population of over 1.3 billion, India's bureaucratic and administrative systems often face inefficiencies and delays, limiting the effectiveness of public service delivery. By automating processes, offering online services, and reducing human intervention, e-governance seeks to address these issues, offering a potential solution to the country's chronic governance challenges. Launched in 2015, the Digital India initiative seeks to enhance the delivery of government services by developing digital infrastructure and expanding internet access, with a particular focus on rural regions. However, the path to successful implementation is riddled with obstacles ranging from infrastructure deficits to issues of digital illiteracy, political resistance, and bureaucratic inertia.

One of the main goals of e-governance is to improve the delivery of public services, making them more transparent, efficient, and accessible. Through digital platforms, citizens can access a wide array of services such as healthcare, education, utility bills, and social security benefits. This not only reduces the need for physical visits to government offices but also enhances the accountability of public officials by making processes more transparent. However, the practical realities of implementing such a large-scale initiative in a country with stark digital divides between urban and rural areas present significant challenges. Moreover, the lack of digital literacy among many segments of the population exacerbates the difficulty of ensuring that the benefits of e-governance reach all citizens, particularly those in rural and underdeveloped regions.

This paper aims to explore the key challenges and opportunities associated with the implementation of e-governance in India, particularly in terms of its role in enhancing public service delivery. The discussion will focus on the Digital India programme and NeGP, exploring both their successes and limitations. Additionally, the paper will highlight how various government policies, reports, and case studies have shaped the e-governance landscape in India. Drawing on literature from Raadschelders (2013), Sangita Dhal (2015), and Dr. M. Sumathy (2016), as well as government reports and other scholarly sources, this paper will provide a comprehensive analysis of the political, technological, and societal challenges to effective e-governance in India.

Ultimately, the paper will propose actionable recommendations for overcoming the barriers to effective e-governance implementation in India. These recommendations will emphasize the importance of building digital infrastructure, promoting digital literacy, and fostering collaboration between the public and private sectors to ensure that e-governance fulfills its potential to improve public service delivery and promote citizen engagement in democratic process.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Raadschelders, J. C. N. (2013). Public Administration

Raadschelders (2013) offers foundational insights into the role of e-governance within public administration, emphasizing transparency, citizen engagement, and government efficiency. His discussion of the theoretical framework helps understand how ICT can transform governance in India by improving accountability and public service delivery. His work is crucial for discussing the fundamental principles underlying India's e-governance initiatives.

2.2 Sangita Dhal (2015). E-Governance and Citizen Engagement: New Directions in Public Administration

Dhal (2015) examines the potential of e-governance to enhance citizen engagement, efficiency, and transparency in government services. She highlights the challenges of digital illiteracy and infrastructure deficits, particularly in rural areas. Dhal's work is essential for understanding the specific barriers India faces in implementing e-governance and the impact on public service delivery, particularly in underserved regions.

2.3 Dr. M. Sumathy (2016). A Handbook of E-Governance in India

Sumathy (2016) explores India's e-governance landscape, focusing on the Digital India and NeGP initiatives. She outlines both the successes and challenges, such as bureaucratic resistance and digital divides. Her work is instrumental in understanding the practical obstacles faced by India in its digital transformation and how these barriers affect public service delivery.

2.4 Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2015). Annual Report: E-Governance Policy Initiatives under Digital India

This report provides an in-depth look at India's government-led initiatives under Digital India, such as broadband highways and Aadhaar. It highlights both successes and areas for improvement, serving as a key source for evaluating how these initiatives aim to enhance service delivery.

2.5 Vikaspedia (n.d.). Concept of E-Governance

Vikaspedia offers a detailed explanation of the NeGP, emphasizing its role in improving service access and transparency. It is valuable for understanding the Indian government's strategic goals and projects within e-governance.

2.6 UNESCO (n.d.). Concept of Governance

UNESCO's definition of governance provides a global framework for understanding how e-governance can promote inclusive, participatory, and responsive government, which aligns with India's democratic aspirations.

3.0 E-GOVERNANCE INITIATIVES IN INDIA

India's efforts to leverage technology for improving public service delivery have been driven by several significant e-governance initiatives. These initiatives aim to make government services more accessible, transparent, and efficient, with a particular focus on reaching marginalized and rural populations. Key programs like Digital India, the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), and the Aadhaar system have played pivotal roles in reshaping the delivery of government services. This section highlights these key initiatives, their objectives, and their contributions to enhancing public service delivery in India.

A) Digital India Programme

Launched in 2015, the Digital India program is one of the most comprehensive and ambitious e-governance initiatives in India. The main goal of the initiative is to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-driven economy. It is structured around three key pillars: providing digital infrastructure as a core utility, ensuring governance and services are available on demand, and promoting the digital empowerment of citizens. These components aim to enhance broadband connectivity, ensure the availability of government services online, and promote digital literacy.

A critical element of the Digital India initiative is the expansion of broadband infrastructure across rural and urban areas. One of the most significant achievements under this program has been the rollout of the National Optical Fiber Network (NOFN), which aims to provide high-speed internet connectivity to over 2.5 lakh villages across India. This connectivity forms the backbone for offering various online government services. Additionally, the Aadhaar system, a biometric-based identification system, has been integrated with a range of government services, including banking, subsidies, and welfare schemes, ensuring that the benefits directly reach the intended beneficiaries.

The Annual Report (2015) by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology highlights that Digital India has resulted in significant improvements in service delivery. For example, the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, which uses Aadhaar for beneficiary identification, has reduced corruption and leakage in welfare programs, ensuring faster and more transparent delivery of government benefits.

B) National e-Governance Plan (NeGP)

The National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), launched in 2006, is a comprehensive initiative aimed at making government services accessible to citizens electronically. The NeGP envisions a shift from traditional administrative methods to digital solutions that simplify interactions between citizens and government institutions. It aims to enhance transparency, reduce delays, and improve service delivery efficiency.

One of the key components of the NeGP is the establishment of Common Services Centers (CSCs), which serve as access points for citizens to avail a wide range of government services. These centers are designed to bring government services to rural areas, where access to traditional government offices is often limited. Through CSCs, citizens can access services such as certification of documents, application for passports, social welfare schemes, and bill payments. This model has significantly improved accessibility and efficiency, particularly in rural areas.

In addition to CSCs, another important initiative under the NeGP is the e-District Project, which digitizes the delivery of services at the district level. The e-District Project allows for the online delivery of services such as land record management, birth and death registrations, and certificates issuance. This has streamlined government operations, reduced paperwork, and significantly increased the speed of service delivery. As noted in the Vikaspedia platform, the e-District Project has played a major role in reducing bureaucratic delays and providing citizens with quicker access to essential services.

C) Aadhaar and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)

The Aadhaar project, launched in 2009, stands out as one of India's most innovative and influential e-governance initiatives. It is a biometric-based identification system that assigns a unique 12-digit identification number to every

Indian citizen. Aadhaar has become integral to a range of government services, especially in the distribution of welfare benefits.

The Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system, launched in 2013, utilizes Aadhaar for the direct transfer of benefits to beneficiaries' bank accounts, eliminating intermediaries and reducing corruption. By linking Aadhaar to various schemes such as food subsidies, fuel distribution, and welfare programs, the government has been able to ensure that the right beneficiaries receive their entitled benefits directly. This has not only enhanced transparency but also reduced leakage and fraud in welfare programs.

A key example of Aadhaar's impact is in the Public Distribution System (PDS), where the government has used Aadhaar to ensure that ration cards are linked to unique biometric identities, thus curbing fake and duplicate ration cards. According to the Annual Report (2015), this initiative has improved efficiency and ensured that food grains and other essential supplies reach the intended recipients without delay.

D) State-Level E-Governance Initiatives

While national initiatives like Digital India and NeGP have been instrumental in improving public service delivery, several states have also implemented their own e-governance programs that cater to regional needs and challenges. Kerala, for instance, has been a leader in e-governance with its Akshaya Project. Launched in 2002, the Akshaya Project focuses on providing digital literacy to rural populations, with the goal of creating a digital-savvy society. Through this initiative, Kerala has established Akshaya Centers that offer computer training, internet access, and government services to rural residents. This project has played a crucial role in bridging the digital divide and empowering rural citizens with technology.

Similarly, Andhra Pradesh has implemented the Mee Seva initiative, which offers over 200 government services online. Mee Seva allows citizens to apply for services such as birth and death certificates, driving licenses, and land records through an online portal. This initiative has helped reduce corruption, bureaucratic inefficiency, and service delays.

Additionally, Madhya Pradesh has made strides in e-governance with its e-District Project and e-Office initiative, which aim to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery. These projects have focused on digitizing government records, providing citizens with access to essential services, and promoting transparency in the public sector.

E) Other Notable Initiatives

In addition to these major initiatives, the government has also launched various smaller-scale e-governance projects that address specific issues. For example, the e-Office Project, which is being implemented across various government departments, aims to digitize internal government communications and reduce paperwork. This project is expected to improve efficiency within government departments by enabling faster decision-making and reducing administrative overhead.

Another notable initiative is the National Portal of India, which serves as a one-stop platform for accessing information about government services, schemes, and policies. The portal aims to make the government more transparent and accountable by providing citizens with easy access to vital information.

India's e-governance initiatives have significantly improved public service delivery, enhancing accessibility, transparency, and efficiency in government processes. Through initiatives like Digital India, the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), Aadhaar, and state-level projects, India has made substantial progress in leveraging technology for better governance. While challenges remain, particularly in terms of infrastructure and digital literacy, these initiatives have set the foundation for transforming India's public service delivery into a more citizen-centric and efficient system.

4.0 CHALLENGES IN E-GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIA

Although India has achieved notable progress in rolling out e-governance initiatives like Digital India, Aadhaar, and the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), various challenges continue to impede the complete realization of their intended impact. These challenges stem from technological, infrastructural, socio-economic, and institutional factors. The key obstacles to the successful implementation of e-governance in India include the digital divide, digital illiteracy, bureaucratic resistance, data security and privacy concerns, and infrastructure inadequacies.

4.1 Digital Divide

A major obstacle in the implementation of e-governance in India is the pronounced digital divide between urban and rural communities. While urban areas benefit from better access to high-speed internet, modern technological infrastructure, and digital literacy programs, rural areas often face considerable disadvantages. According to the Department of Electronics and Information Technology (2015), approximately 60% of India's population lives in rural areas, where internet connectivity and digital infrastructure are limited. In rural regions, low broadband penetration, poor electricity supply, and the lack of basic IT infrastructure hinder the effective delivery of digital government services.

The digital divide also manifests in the urban-rural literacy gap, with urban areas having greater access to computer training and digital tools compared to their rural counterparts. This divide limits the ability of rural citizens to take full advantage of e-governance platforms, hindering their access to government services like healthcare, education, and welfare schemes. Thus, bridging the digital divide remains an ongoing challenge for India's e-governance initiatives.

4.2 Digital Illiteracy

Closely related to the digital divide is digital illiteracy. Despite efforts to promote digital literacy through programs like Digital India, many citizens, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary skills to navigate digital platforms. As of 2021, India's literacy rate stands at around 74%, but digital literacy remains a significant challenge. Sangita Dhal (2015) discusses how a substantial portion of the population, especially in rural and underprivileged areas, lacks the basic computer skills necessary to access government services online.

This illiteracy not only affects individuals' ability to use government portals but also creates difficulties in ensuring that digital literacy programs are appropriately tailored to local contexts. The success of initiatives like Common Service Centers (CSCs) relies heavily on the ability of citizens to understand and engage with the technology. Digital illiteracy also exacerbates the digital divide, making it harder for rural populations to interact with government services or access the e-Government platforms that have been set up to facilitate governance.

4.3 Bureaucratic Resistance

Another significant challenge faced in the implementation of e-governance initiatives is bureaucratic resistance. Government employees and officials, particularly in traditional administrative setups, often show reluctance toward adopting digital platforms and technologies. This resistance is sometimes rooted in fear of technological changes, lack of familiarity with new systems, and concern over job displacement due to automation.

As highlighted in the Vikaspedia platform, many government officials are accustomed to paper-based work methods, and shifting to digital systems often requires a substantial mindset change. Furthermore, bureaucratic inertia and lack of training can delay the adoption of e-governance initiatives. In some instances, government employees may intentionally create barriers to the implementation of e-governance projects, either due to insufficient skills or the desire to maintain control over administrative processes.

Additionally, administrative red tape and lack of coordination between various government departments also delay the integration of new digital systems, leading to inefficiencies and inconsistent implementation across states.

4.4 Data Security and Privacy Concerns

The issue of data security and privacy has become a growing concern with the increasing reliance on digital platforms for public service delivery. With the proliferation of the Aadhaar system and other biometric data systems, citizens' personal data has been stored in centralized databases, which makes it vulnerable to potential data breaches, cyberattacks, or misuse. The Annual Report (2015) by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology acknowledges these concerns, stating that securing citizens' data is a priority, but challenges remain in ensuring adequate safeguards.

India's Aadhaar system, which stores sensitive personal and biometric data, has faced scrutiny over its security vulnerabilities and the risk of data misuse. In 2018, a Supreme Court ruling raised concerns regarding privacy issues, leading to discussions about the adequacy of legal frameworks to protect citizens' data in the digital age. The absence of a comprehensive data protection law until the recent introduction of the Personal Data Protection Bill (2021) further exacerbates fears about data exploitation by private entities and government agencies.

4.5 Infrastructure Challenges

India's e-governance initiatives depend heavily on robust digital infrastructure. However, despite the expansion of broadband services through initiatives like NOFN (National Optical Fiber Network), there are still substantial gaps in connectivity, particularly in remote rural areas. Poor internet access, frequent power outages, and poor network connectivity in rural regions make it difficult for citizens to access e-government services. Even in urban areas, connectivity issues such as network congestion and slow internet speeds continue to affect the efficiency of e-governance services.

Moreover, the government's focus on creating digital platforms and expanding internet services has often overshadowed the maintenance and upgrading of existing infrastructure. This has resulted in inefficiencies in service delivery, with many government websites and digital platforms becoming inaccessible during peak hours due to server overloads or technical glitches.

4.6 Inclusivity of E-Governance Services

A key challenge is ensuring that e-governance services are accessible to all segments of the population. While India's e-governance initiatives have made strides in expanding access to digital services, certain marginalized groups—such as the elderly, women, and people with disabilities—are often excluded from the benefits of these digital

platforms. This issue is particularly evident in rural areas, where the lack of digital literacy and low mobile phone penetration among certain demographic groups can leave them behind in the digital transition. According to Raadschelders (2013), ensuring universal access to digital platforms is one of the primary challenges in achieving effective e-governance.

While India's e-governance initiatives have made remarkable progress in enhancing public service delivery, challenges such as the digital divide, bureaucratic resistance, data privacy concerns, and infrastructural limitations continue to impede their full potential. Overcoming these challenges necessitates a comprehensive strategy that involves enhancing digital literacy, strengthening infrastructure, and establishing robust legal frameworks to ensure data security. It is only through such concerted efforts that India can fully harness the potential of e-governance and guarantee its benefits reach all sections of the population.

5.0 OPPORTUNITIES IN E-GOVERNANCE IMPLEMENTATION IN INDIA

E-governance in India presents a significant opportunity for transforming the relationship between the state and its citizens. With the government's concerted focus on digital initiatives like Digital India, Aadhaar, and the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), India is poised to leverage technology to enhance service delivery, promote transparency, and empower citizens. These initiatives not only aim to improve the efficiency and accessibility of government services but also open up numerous opportunities for socio-economic development, citizen engagement, and institutional reforms.

5.1 Enhanced Accessibility of Services

One of the most significant opportunities presented by e-governance is the enhanced accessibility of public services, especially for rural and underserved communities. Traditionally, citizens in remote and rural areas have struggled with limited access to government services due to geographical barriers, lack of infrastructure, and cumbersome bureaucratic processes. E-governance, by shifting services online, breaks down these barriers, allowing citizens to access essential services such as social welfare programs, healthcare, education, and legal services at their convenience, from their homes or local access points like Common Service Centers (CSCs).

For example, through initiatives like e-District and Mee Seva, citizens in rural India can apply for birth certificates, land records, and other essential documents without having to travel long distances. This increased accessibility reduces time and costs for citizens, while also improving their engagement with government services. In this way, e-governance can help create a more inclusive governance system that reaches even the most marginalized sections of society.

5.2 Improved Transparency and Reduced Corruption

E-governance provides an excellent opportunity to tackle corruption and promote transparency within government institutions. By digitizing service delivery, administrative processes are made more transparent, reducing opportunities for manipulation, fraud, and bribery. The integration of digital platforms allows for tracking of transactions, clear record-keeping, and public visibility of service delivery processes. This not only ensures that services reach their intended beneficiaries but also fosters public trust in government institutions.

For example, the Aadhaar-based Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) system has already reduced corruption in welfare schemes by ensuring that subsidies and benefits are directly transferred to the intended recipient's bank account, bypassing intermediaries. The Annual Report (2015) by the Department of Electronics and Information Technology highlights how DBT has led to a reduction in leakage and fraud by automating the transfer of benefits, which has not only improved transparency but also ensured faster and more effective delivery.

5.3 Empowerment of Citizens through Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is a critical enabler of the broader success of e-governance initiatives. As more citizens gain access to digital tools, they are empowered to engage more fully with government services, participate in decision-making, and exercise their rights and responsibilities as informed citizens. Through programs like Digital India, Common Service Centers (CSCs), and state-level initiatives like Kerala's Akshaya Project, the government has provided training and resources to promote digital literacy, particularly in rural areas.

By enhancing digital skills, citizens can access government portals, apply for government schemes, and participate in online surveys and consultations, making governance more participatory and democratic. The empowerment of citizens through digital education thus represents a key opportunity for social development and political engagement. This shift towards digital inclusion also has the potential to promote greater equality by giving disadvantaged groups, such as women and marginalized communities, the tools and knowledge they need to engage with the government more effectively.

5.4 Efficiency Gains and Cost Reduction

E-governance creates significant opportunities for improving the efficiency of government operations and reducing administrative costs. By automating routine tasks, streamlining processes, and reducing paper-based systems, the government can not only reduce operational costs but also improve the speed and accuracy of service delivery. For

example, the implementation of the e-Office initiative in various states helps digitize internal government communications, reducing paperwork, and speeding up decision-making. This leads to faster service delivery, fewer delays, and a reduction in the costs associated with manual processing.

Moreover, the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), which focuses on delivering government services online, has the potential to save both time and money for the government and the citizens. The CSC model, by enabling local access points for services, allows for a reduction in infrastructure costs typically associated with building new government offices and service centers.

5.5 Fostering Innovation and Economic Growth

The rise of e-governance also presents a tremendous opportunity for innovation within the public sector. Digital platforms and tools create a space for new ideas and technologies, which can improve not only public service delivery but also create opportunities for entrepreneurs and innovators. For instance, the growth of Fintech solutions in India, such as mobile payment apps and digital wallets, has been made possible by government initiatives like Aadhaar and the Jan Dhan Yojana (financial inclusion program). These developments can complement e-governance by facilitating cashless transactions, reducing the informal economy, and promoting financial inclusion.

Furthermore, the development of smart cities as part of the Digital India initiative fosters technological innovation in urban governance. Smart city projects focus on using IoT (Internet of Things), big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) to make cities more efficient, livable, and sustainable. These innovations have the potential to improve public services like transportation, waste management, healthcare, and energy distribution, creating economic opportunities in the tech sector and boosting overall economic growth.

5.6 Facilitating Decentralized Governance

E-governance initiatives also offer a unique opportunity to promote decentralized governance by empowering local government bodies and officials. By enabling online services and real-time data access, e-governance facilitates better coordination and decision-making at the grassroots level. Projects like the e-District initiative and M-Governance have already demonstrated how information can be shared across different levels of government more efficiently.

For instance, e-District aims to streamline service delivery at the district level, which often faces bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies. By digitizing services like land record management, birth and death registration, and certification issuance, the e-District initiative allows citizens to receive services quickly and reduces the scope for corruption. It also empowers district officers by providing them with digital tools to manage administrative processes more effectively, thereby promoting better governance at the local level.

E-governance presents India with numerous opportunities to enhance efficiency, transparency, and citizen engagement in public administration. By addressing existing gaps in service delivery, empowering citizens, and fostering innovation, digital initiatives can lay the foundation for a more inclusive, equitable, and responsive governance system. With continued focus on expanding digital infrastructure, improving digital literacy, and addressing challenges like data privacy, e-governance has the potential to significantly transform India's public sector, creating a more streamlined, accountable, and accessible system for all citizens.

6.0 CONCLUSION

E-governance in India represents a transformative approach to public administration, offering substantial opportunities to improve service delivery, enhance transparency, and empower citizens. Through initiatives like Digital India, Aadhaar, and the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP), the government has made notable progress in shifting administrative processes from paper-based systems to digital platforms. These initiatives have brought about significant improvements in the accessibility and efficiency of government services, especially for marginalized and rural communities. Moreover, the focus on digital literacy and inclusive governance provides citizens with the tools to engage more actively with government systems.

However, challenges such as the digital divide, data security concerns, bureaucratic resistance, and infrastructure gaps remain. These obstacles continue to hinder the full realization of e-governance's potential, especially for the most vulnerable sections of society. Addressing these challenges will require sustained efforts, including investing in infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy programs, and creating robust legal frameworks for data protection. Despite these challenges, the opportunities provided by e-governance are immense. The potential for cost reduction, innovation, economic growth, and the promotion of decentralized governance presents a compelling case for continued investment and reform. As India progresses towards becoming a digitally empowered society, e-governance will play a crucial role in ensuring that government services are not only more efficient but also more inclusive, transparent, and accountable.

In conclusion, e-governance is not just a technological upgrade but a fundamental shift towards a more democratic, citizen-centric, and modernized public administration system. With focused attention on overcoming challenges, India has the opportunity to transform governance for the betterment of all its citizens.

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INDIA'S SECURITY POLICY IN THE CONTEXT OF BORDER CONFLICTS: A STUDY OF INDIA-CHINA RELATIONS

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Abstract

India's security policy in the context of its border disputes with China has been a critical component of its national defense strategy. The India-China border conflict, which includes long-standing territorial disagreements, has shaped India's security posture and diplomatic interactions in the region. This paper seeks to analyze the evolution of India's security policy with a focus on its responses to China's actions along the disputed border, especially after key confrontations like the 1962 Sino-Indian War, Doklam Standoff (2017), and the Galwan Valley clash (2020). It also examines the role of military strategy, border infrastructure, diplomatic efforts, and multilateral forums in mitigating tensions. The growing military modernization by China and its strategic ambitions have further shaped India's policies, leading to a complex mix of deterrence, engagement, and counterbalancing strategies. Through analyzing India's strategic, military, and diplomatic responses, the paper highlights both the challenges India faces in securing its borders and the strategic adjustments it must make to navigate future confrontations. The findings underscore the significance of a balanced military and diplomatic approach in addressing India's security concerns with China.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The India-China border dispute has been one of the most persistent and complex issues in India's foreign and security policy since the country's independence. Stretching over 3,488 kilometers, the border remains a flashpoint for bilateral tensions, characterized by conflicting territorial claims, historical misunderstandings, and, at times, military standoffs. The Sino-Indian War of 1962 set the tone for much of the strained relationship between the two nations, and despite several attempts at diplomacy, the dispute continues to shape India's security strategy.

India's security policy towards China has evolved over the decades, responding to both changing geopolitical dynamics and the growing military capabilities of its northern neighbor. The conflict, which involves multiple regions, including Aksai Chin and the Arunachal Pradesh areas, has pushed India to adapt its defense strategy, balancing between military deterrence and diplomatic engagement. Over the past decade, China's rapid military modernization, the advancement of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and its increasingly assertive stance in regional matters—particularly in the South China Sea and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—have introduced new complexities to the border dispute and heightened security concerns for India.

India's responses have been influenced not only by its military capabilities but also by its active participation in multilateral platforms like BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), as well as its deepening strategic partnerships with the United States and Russia. Incidents such as the Doklam Standoff in 2017 and the Galwan Valley Clash in 2020 highlighted the fragile nature of the India-China border, prompting renewed demands for strategic adjustments in India's defense and foreign policy frameworks. These confrontations have also highlighted the challenges faced by India in securing its borders and formulating a coherent security policy that addresses both military deterrence and diplomatic dialogue.

This paper delves into the historical, strategic, and contemporary aspects of India's security policy concerning the India-China border dispute. By analyzing India's military posturing, diplomatic efforts, and its engagement in security dialogues, this study aims to assess how India has responded to China's growing regional and global assertiveness and the impact of this dispute on its overall national security strategy. Through this exploration, the paper underscores the significant role of India's security policy in addressing the complexities of its relationship with China.

2. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE

The India-China border dispute ranks among the longest-standing territorial conflicts in contemporary history, originating during the colonial era and persisting into the post-independence period. Understanding the evolution of this conflict requires an exploration of its historical origins, the legacy of colonial-era decisions, and the implications of India's post-independence diplomatic and strategic posture.

2.1 The Colonial Legacy and Early Tensions

The origins of the India-China border dispute stem from British colonial rule in India, which resulted in persistent ambiguities regarding the demarcation of the border. During British rule, India's borders were often drawn based on colonial interests and local administrative convenience, rather than on considerations of national identity or the complex cultural and ethnic realities of the region. Two key agreements, the Simla Accord of 1914 and the McMahon Line, became central to the dispute.

The Simla Accord established the McMahon Line, which was drawn to delineate the border between British India and Tibet, effectively delineating the eastern sector of the India-China border. However, China, which was not represented during the Simla Conference, rejected the McMahon Line. This rejection became one of the core points of contention between India and China in later years. In the western sector, the dispute over Aksai Chin, an area in the Ladakh region, arose due to differences in the alignment of borders in colonial-era maps.

2.2 Post-Independence Developments

After India's independence in 1947, the new Indian government inherited the unresolved border issues with China. India adopted a largely diplomatic approach to address these issues, focusing on peaceful negotiations and establishing friendly relations with its neighbors. The early years of India's foreign policy, under Jawaharlal Nehru, were characterized by an emphasis on non-alignment and peaceful coexistence, as enshrined in the Panchsheel Agreement of 1954. However, despite these efforts, tensions simmered along the border, particularly over the northeastern and western regions.

The situation deteriorated in 1959 when China asserted its control over Tibet, a region that India had historically maintained close cultural and diplomatic ties with. China's growing military presence in Tibet, coupled with its claim to Aksai Chin, escalated India-China tensions. In 1959, China closed the Tibetan Plateau to Indian religious pilgrims and travelers, further straining relations.

2.3 The 1962 Sino-Indian War

The Sino-Indian War of 1962 represented a crucial turning point in the history of the border dispute, with the conflict primarily arising from territorial disagreements in the Aksai Chin area and along the McMahon Line in Arunachal Pradesh. India and China engaged in an intense military conflict, which lasted for about a month. China's military superiority, combined with India's lack of preparation and the mismanagement of intelligence and military resources, led to India's defeat. China successfully captured Aksai Chin, while the border in the eastern sector

The aftermath of the war was profound, not only for the immediate border dispute but also for India's defense policy and its approach towards China. The war exposed India's vulnerability to China's military power and led to a complete overhaul of India's defense and security policies, with a renewed focus on modernization and building military infrastructure along the border.

2.4 Post-1962: Border Negotiations and Continuing Tensions

In the decades following the war, India and China engaged in multiple rounds of negotiations, but the resolution of the border dispute remained elusive. The 1962 war left a profound and lasting impact on India's national consciousness, and security concerns continued to dominate the bilateral relationship. Over the years, the border remained a site of periodic skirmishes, with occasional flare-ups such as the Nathu La and Cho La clashes of 1967. These incidents, although smaller in scale, demonstrated the volatility of the border region and the continuing tensions between the two countries.

In the 1980s, efforts at border negotiations were renewed with the Rajiv Gandhi government's initiative to improve ties with China. A series of talks on the border issue resulted in the Agreement on Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity in 1993, followed by a more comprehensive border peace and security agreement in 1996. These agreements, while not resolving the core territorial disputes, established mechanisms for communication, confidence-building measures, and a process for resolving skirmishes without escalating them into full-scale conflicts.

2.5 The 21st Century: Standoffs and Strategic Adjustments

The 21st century saw a resurgence of tensions, particularly with China's growing economic and military capabilities. The 2000s and 2010s witnessed a series of high-profile border skirmishes, including the 2017 Doklam Standoff issue and the 2020 Galwan Valley clash. These incidents underscored the continued volatility of the India-China border and the difficulty of resolving the dispute through diplomatic means alone.

The Doklam Standoff involved Chinese construction activity near the Chumbi Valley, an area that is strategically important for both China and India. India, supporting Bhutan's territorial claims, intervened to halt Chinese construction, which led to a tense military standoff. In 2020, the Galwan Valley clash resulted in a violent confrontation between Indian and Chinese troops, leading to casualties on both sides. These skirmishes highlighted the limits of diplomatic engagement and the increasing militarization of the border region.

Therefore, the historical background of the India-China border dispute reveals a complex and evolving relationship marked by periods of conflict, diplomacy, and strategic rivalry. While efforts to resolve the dispute have continued over the years, the border remains a source of tension, influenced by the legacies of colonialism, the strategic interests of both countries, and the broader geopolitical environment. India's security policy regarding China, shaped by these historical factors, continues to evolve as both countries jockey for influence in the region and beyond.

3. EVOLUTION OF INDIA'S SECURITY POLICY

India's security policy, particularly in relation to its border disputes, has evolved significantly since independence, shaped by both domestic and international factors. The evolving strategic environment, coupled with historical events such as the 1962 Sino-Indian War, the Cold War, and regional tensions, have significantly influenced India's defense and foreign policy. India's security policy towards China, specifically, has undergone several phases—initial appeasement, military preparedness, nuclear deterrence, and strategic outreach—all responding to the shifting security challenges posed by China.

3.1 Early Post-Independence Period: Diplomacy and Idealism (1947-1962)

At the time of independence in 1947, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, India pursued a foreign policy grounded in the principles of non-alignment, peaceful coexistence, and the right to self-determination. India's early approach towards its borders, particularly with China, was marked by idealism and optimism. The Panchsheel Agreement of 1954, which India signed with China, encapsulated these ideals. The agreement was intended to promote peaceful relations between the two nations, based on mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity. However, India's security policy was largely characterized by a non-confrontational stance. Nehru's belief in peaceful diplomacy, along with his vision of an independent and neutral India, led to an underestimation of China's intentions in the region.

In the early 1950s, India began asserting its claims over territories like Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh, but China's growing assertiveness, particularly in Tibet, was not immediately recognized as a threat by New Delhi. The India-China border dispute was downplayed in favor of building closer diplomatic relations, yet it became apparent that China had differing territorial ambitions, especially with its claims over India's northeastern regions.

3.2 The 1962 Sino-Indian War: A Major Policy Shift

The 1962 Sino-Indian War marked a dramatic shift in India's security policy. The war, which saw India suffer a humiliating defeat at the hands of a far more organized and well-equipped Chinese military, exposed the fragility of India's defense posture. The defeat made it clear that India had underestimated the military threat posed by China

In the post-1962 period, India began to prioritize military modernization, focusing on strengthening its border infrastructure and boosting defense capabilities. The Defence Ministry initiated efforts to establish stronger military deterrence in the region, especially in Ladakh and the Northeast. The Indian military, previously reliant on outdated equipment and underfunded, underwent a significant expansion and modernization process. A shift towards self-reliance in defense production was initiated, and India began increasing its defense expenditure, which continued to rise through the Cold War era.

3.3 Cold War Era and Strategic Alignments (1963-1991)

During the Cold War era, India's security policy was heavily influenced by its non-aligned status, but the growing Sino-Soviet rivalry also affected its stance. India's relations with the Soviet Union became a key pillar of its defense policy. The India-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation (1971) served as a counterbalance to China's growing military power and strategic reach in the region. India viewed China's actions with increasing wariness as China's growing influence in Asia and its support for Pakistan in the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War became clear.

India's security policy towards China during this period was primarily shaped by a combination of deterrence and engagement. Despite tensions, India's relationship with China remained diplomatically pragmatic, as evidenced by border talks in the 1970s and 1980s. However, India continued to modernize its defense forces to counter any potential Chinese aggression. India's nuclear program also became a key part of its security strategy during this time, with India testing its first nuclear weapon in 1974. The nuclear deterrent was seen as an important part of India's strategic defense, given China's own nuclear capabilities.

3.4 Post-Cold War and the Nuclear Era (1992-2000)

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s represented a major transformation in the global strategic landscape. During this period, India confronted numerous internal and external security challenges, such as the insurgency in Kashmir and China's growing military assertiveness in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. Having depended heavily on the Soviet Union for defense assistance, India was compelled to reevaluate its security policy amid shifting global alignments.

India's nuclear weapons program, which had long been a subject of controversy, became a central pillar of its security policy in the post-Cold War era. In 1998, India carried out a series of nuclear tests known as Pokhran-II, signaling its readiness to assert itself as a nuclear power and establishing a credible deterrent against China's own growing military capabilities. The nuclear deterrence strategy was now central to India's approach to China, as it offered a credible means of deterring Chinese aggression while also signaling India's rising geopolitical profile.

3.5 21st Century and Strategic Adaptation (2000-Present)

During the 2000s and 2010s, India progressively strengthened strategic partnerships with key powers including the United States, Japan, and Australia, culminating in the formation of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), a security framework designed to counterbalance China's expanding influence in the Indo-Pacific region. India also focused on strengthening its military infrastructure along the border with China, particularly in Ladakh and the Northeast, while continuing to engage in high-level diplomacy with China to resolve outstanding territorial disputes.

The Doklam Standoff issue in 2017 and the Galwan Valley clash in 2020 were critical moments that forced India to rethink its military preparedness and strategic policy. While India sought to avoid full-scale conflict, it demonstrated increased military resolve, deploying forces to areas such as Ladakh and fortifying its defenses. The role of military modernization, border infrastructure development, and multilateral diplomacy became central to India's evolving approach towards China, blending both deterrence and engagement.

So, India's security policy, in the context of its border conflict with China, has evolved in response to shifting geopolitical dynamics and changing military realities. From the idealism of the Nehruvian era to the pragmatic military preparedness of post-1962 India, and from nuclear deterrence to strategic alliances, India's security policy has been shaped by the need to secure its borders while balancing diplomatic engagement with military deterrence. The evolving nature of China's regional ambitions and military modernization continues to challenge India's security policy, but India's approach remains one of cautious engagement, while strengthening its military capabilities in order to deter and counter any possible threats.

4. STRATEGIC AND MILITARY RESPONSES TO THE INDIA-CHINA BORDER CONFLICT

The India-China border conflict has remained a central element of India's security policy for more than seventy years. Since the 1962 Sino-Indian War, India's strategic and military responses to the China border dispute have evolved significantly. These responses have ranged from defensive posturing to offensive deterrence, shaped by shifting geopolitical circumstances, strategic assessments, and domestic security imperatives. India has adopted a multi-faceted approach that includes enhancing military readiness, fortifying its border infrastructure, engaging in diplomatic dialogues, and strengthening its alliances with regional and global powers.

4.1 Strengthening Military Infrastructure and Modernization

A key component of India's strategic and military response to the China border conflict has been the ongoing

modernization of its armed forces. The Indian Army has invested heavily in upgrading its military capabilities, particularly along the northern border with China, to ensure deterrence and preparedness in case of escalation. India's military strategy is rooted in the concept of defensive deterrence, ensuring that China does not perceive India as vulnerable to military aggression, while also maintaining the option for a robust response if necessary.

A central part of India's military strategy is the improvement of infrastructure in the border areas. The construction of all-weather roads, airfields, and rail links has been a priority, particularly in the strategically significant regions of Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim. These infrastructure projects, spearheaded by the Border Roads Organisation (BRO), allow for faster troop mobilization, the quick movement of supplies, and the rapid establishment of defensive positions, thus enhancing India's operational readiness. By improving infrastructure, India ensures that its forces can respond quickly to any potential Chinese advances, while simultaneously enabling surveillance and border management.

In terms of military modernization, India has focused on enhancing both its land-based capabilities and air superiority. The induction of more sophisticated fighter aircraft, missile systems, and drones is intended to bolster India's air defenses and enhance its ability to strike targets deep within hostile territory. Moreover, India has prioritized the procurement of high-tech surveillance equipment and intelligence capabilities to monitor the activities of the Chinese military along the border. The S-400 air defense system, acquired from Russia, is a key example of India's growing air defense capabilities, allowing for the tracking and neutralizing of hostile aerial threats from China.

4.2 Enhanced Military Posturing and Preparedness

In reaction to China's increasing military assertiveness, India has implemented a policy of forward deployment along the border. The Indian Army has created several mountain strike corps, specialized in mountain warfare, to ensure that India can effectively combat any incursions or aggressions in the tough, rugged terrain of the Himalayas. The establishment of a mountain warfare school in Sonamarg (Jammu & Kashmir) and the continued training of soldiers in high-altitude conditions reflect the prioritization of this unique form of warfare.

The Galwan Valley Clash of 2020 demonstrated how quickly tensions could escalate into physical confrontation. In the aftermath of the clash, India strengthened its military presence in the region, with forces stationed in key locations such as Pangong Tso, Dokan La, and the Siachen Glacier. These regions, which have traditionally been sensitive due to their proximity to both China and Pakistan, have become focal points for India's strategic deployment.

The military response also extends to naval and air forces, with India strengthening its maritime and aerial strategic presence in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. Chinese incursions into the South China Sea and its increasing naval footprint in the region have prompted India to maintain a strong naval presence, collaborating closely with its strategic partners, including the United States, Japan, and Australia in the Quad framework. The INS Vikramaditya, INS Chakra, and INS Arihant are key assets in India's defense portfolio, contributing to the country's deterrent capabilities against China.

4.3 Strategic Alliances and Diplomatic Responses

While India has prioritized military preparedness, it has equally emphasized the role of diplomacy in managing its relationship with China. India's approach to the border conflict has involved multilateral engagement, including engagement in multilateral organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS forum, to build a diplomatic framework for engagement with China. Through these forums, India has tried to ensure that any territorial dispute is settled peacefully, based on established international norms and bilateral agreements.

Simultaneously, India has strengthened its strategic relationships with major global powers such as the United States, Russia, and Japan. Notably, the expansion of India's security partnership with the United States has played a crucial role in countering China's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region. Joint military exercises, defense agreements such as the Lemoa (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement) and COMCASA (Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement), and intelligence-sharing arrangements have contributed to a more robust security framework for India.

Moreover, India's involvement in the Quad (the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) has further strengthened its position vis-à-vis China. The Quad is a diplomatic and military alliance comprising India, the United States, Japan, and Australia. While its primary objective is to promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, the Quad is also regarded as a strategic response to China's expanding influence in the area. Through the Quad, India has been able to bolster its security posture, aligning itself with key democratic powers in a common cause of regional stability.

5.0 NUCLEAR DETERRENCE AND STRATEGIC POSTURE

An essential element of India's strategic response to China's military buildup is its nuclear deterrent. Since the Pokhran nuclear tests of 1974, India has maintained a policy of credible minimum deterrence, with its nuclear arsenal seen as a key safeguard against external threats. While China also possesses a nuclear arsenal, India's nuclear doctrine remains focused on ensuring a no-first-use policy and retaliation in the case of a nuclear attack.

India's nuclear strategy is complemented by its ballistic missile defense systems and strategic deterrence measures, ensuring that India is capable of countering any conventional or nuclear escalation from China. The advancement of

Thus, India's strategic and military responses to the India-China border conflict have been multi-dimensional, encompassing military preparedness, infrastructural development, strategic alliances, and diplomatic engagement. The evolution of India's security policy reflects the complexity of the border dispute and the shifting geopolitical realities of the region. While India continues to focus on military modernization and forward deployments, it also emphasizes diplomacy and strategic partnerships as part of a broader, comprehensive approach to managing its security concerns with China. With the growing regional challenges posed by China, India's responses will continue to evolve, balancing military readiness with diplomatic engagement in the quest for peace and security in the border areas.

6. DIPLOMATIC AND POLITICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE DISPUTE

The India-China border dispute is not only a military and strategic issue but also a deeply political and diplomatic challenge. The conflict over territories such as Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh has shaped India's foreign policy and its diplomatic engagements with China for decades. India's approach to this dispute has evolved from assertive diplomacy to calculated engagement while balancing national security concerns with regional stability and international cooperation.

6.1 Early Diplomatic Efforts and the Panchsheel Agreement

In the initial years following Independence, India's diplomatic policy towards China was based on the principles of Panchsheel—five principles of peaceful coexistence—first outlined in the 1954 Sino-Indian Agreement. The Panchsheel Agreement sought to promote mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, and peaceful resolution of disputes. India's leadership under Jawaharlal Nehru hoped this framework would foster a strong bilateral relationship with China. However, the mutual trust envisioned by the agreement soon dissolved as both countries found themselves at odds over territorial claims.

Despite India's optimistic approach, China's actions in Tibet and subsequent military buildup in the region led to growing tensions. India's assertiveness over the Aksai Chin area, which China had annexed during the 1950s, brought the diplomatic process to a halt. The 1962 Sino-Indian War further strained relations and demonstrated the limits of diplomatic engagement when territorial disputes remain unresolved. Post-war, India's diplomatic stance became more defensive, focusing on ensuring that China did not gain further territorial advantages.

6.2 Modern Diplomatic Engagement and Border Talks

Since the 1980s, India and China have held numerous rounds of border talks aimed at resolving their territorial disputes, though progress has been slow. These talks, particularly those held under the Special Representative Mechanism, have focused on confidence-building measures (CBMs), border management, and increased military-to-military communication to avoid accidental clashes. However, despite several agreements, such as the 1993 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the 2005 Protocol on Modalities for the Implementation of Confidence-Building Measures, the border issue remains unresolved.

In recent years, diplomatic channels have become more sophisticated, with the two countries engaging in high-level dialogues and multilateral forums such as the BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). However, despite these efforts, tensions have flared, as seen in the Doklam Standoff (2017) and the Galwan Valley clash (2020), which resulted in the loss of lives. These incidents highlight the limits of diplomatic efforts and the inherent volatility of the dispute.

6.3 China's Rising Power and India's Diplomatic Response

China's increasing economic and military strength in the 21st century has complicated India's diplomatic approach to the border dispute. While India aims to manage tensions through bilateral dialogue and trade relations with China, it remains cautious of China's expanding influence, particularly in strategic areas such as the Indian Ocean and South Asia. In response, India has sought to bolster alliances with regional and global powers, including the United States, Japan, and Australia, through mechanisms like the Quad to address these challenges effectively. This allows India to counterbalance China's growing strategic footprint while maintaining a pragmatic approach in resolving the border issue.

The diplomatic dimension also extends to global governance forums, where India has advocated for greater international cooperation on security and regional stability, pushing for multilateral solutions to resolve longstanding disputes. At the same time, India's decision to pursue a nuclear deterrent in the face of China's military modernization is a political response, signaling India's readiness to assert its sovereignty and protect its interests against any future military escalation.

6.4 Domestic Politics and Public Sentiment

Domestically, the border conflict has been a significant issue in Indian politics, often invoked by political leaders to garner support and emphasize national security. The nationalistic sentiments regarding the India-China border have played a crucial role in shaping public opinion. Political leaders across various parties, especially during election periods, have used the border issue to highlight their commitment to national defense and sovereignty.

This internal political dynamic influences India's diplomatic approaches and makes any compromise on territorial claims a highly sensitive issue.

India's approach to the India-China border dispute remains a delicate balance between domestic politics, national security, and diplomatic engagement. Although India remains committed to diplomatic engagement, it maintains a cautious stance toward China's expanding influence in both global and regional political arenas. The complexity of the dispute lies in finding a middle ground that satisfies national security concerns while fostering a stable and cooperative relationship with a rising China.

7. CHINA'S MILITARY MODERNIZATION AND THE STRATEGIC DILEMMA FOR INDIA

China's rapid military modernization has emerged as a significant strategic challenge for India, particularly in the context of their ongoing border disputes and geopolitical rivalry. Since the 1990s, China has committed substantial resources to modernize its armed forces, transforming them into a highly capable, technologically advanced military. This transformation has created a security dilemma for India, as it must address the growing military power of its neighbor while managing its own defense priorities.

7.1 The Modernization of China's Military

China's military modernization strategy has been characterized by significant investments in advanced technology, missile systems, aircraft, naval capabilities, and cyber warfare. Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, China has focused on transforming its People's Liberation Army (PLA) into a modern, joint-force military capable of conducting operations across air, land, sea, space, and cyberspace. The Chinese military's emphasis on modern warfare capabilities is seen through the development of precision-guided weapons, anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) systems, hypersonic missiles, and nuclear-capable delivery systems.

In particular, China's air force has undergone a complete overhaul, with the induction of advanced fighter jets like the J-20 stealth fighter and the J-10. Similarly, its missile capabilities, including the DF-21D anti-ship ballistic missile, which has been termed a "carrier killer," reflect China's strategic focus on undermining India's naval and air superiority. In addition, China's growing capabilities in cyber and space warfare present another layer of complexity to India's security concerns, as these domains have become integral to modern military strategy.

China has also focused on strengthening its naval forces, with the expansion of its Blue Water Navy, reflecting its ambition to dominate the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. The commissioning of aircraft carriers, submarines, and destroyers has increased China's maritime reach, which, from India's perspective, directly challenges its security and geopolitical interests in the Indian Ocean Region.

7.2 Strategic Dilemma for India

China's military modernization presents a strategic dilemma for India in several ways. First, there is the asymmetry between India's and China's military capabilities. While India has made strides in modernizing its military, particularly with the acquisition of advanced systems like the S-400 air defense system, the INS Arihant nuclear submarine, and Tejas fighter jets, its military remains comparatively less advanced than China's. The defense budget of China, which surpasses India's by a wide margin, enables it to consistently upgrade and expand its military assets. This creates a sense of insecurity in India, particularly given that the China-Pakistan nexus also adds another layer of complexity to India's strategic outlook.

The India-China border conflict is exacerbated by the fact that India is contending with a military neighbor whose capabilities extend well beyond traditional warfare. India's military strategy, traditionally centered on a defensive deterrence posture, must now account for the evolving offensive capabilities of China. China's growing focus on anti-satellite weapons, electronic warfare, and nuclear-powered submarines has forced India to reconsider its defense posture and invest in cutting-edge technologies to remain competitive.

India's strategic dilemma is also evident in its response to China's growing economic footprint. As China increases its influence in South Asia, Africa, and beyond through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India faces both military and diplomatic encirclement due to China's expanding influence. In the Indian Ocean, China's growing investments in ports and infrastructure across Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bangladesh have heightened concerns over potential encroachment on India's maritime domain. In response to this strategic challenge, India has been compelled to strengthen its naval capabilities, including the procurement of advanced submarines and aircraft carriers, to effectively counterbalance China's increasing presence in the region.

7.3 India's Response: Counteracting the Dilemma

In response to China's military modernization, India has pursued a strategy of military modernization, alliances with global powers, and strengthening regional partnerships. One key aspect of India's response is the modernization of its armed forces, with a focus on enhanced deterrence capabilities, including the development of its own nuclear triad and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). India's nuclear doctrine, which emphasizes credible minimum deterrence, serves as a countermeasure to China's nuclear expansion.

India has also reinforced its strategic partnerships with major global powers, notably the United States, through initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). This alliance provides India with strategic depth and access to advanced military technologies, including drones, intelligence-sharing arrangements, and missile defense systems. Additionally, India's engagement in multilateral defense forums such as the Shanghai Cooperation

To counter China's naval expansion, India has increasingly focused on enhancing its maritime capabilities, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), through partnerships with countries like Japan, Australia, and the United States. The expansion of India's naval assets, including submarines, aircraft carriers, and maritime surveillance systems, aims to bolster India's regional maritime dominance and protect its strategic interests.

In addition, India has ramped up its border infrastructure projects to ensure rapid mobilization of troops and resources in high-altitude regions. This includes the development of airstrips, roads, and supply depots along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China. India's forward-deployed forces, including specialized mountain warfare units, are increasingly crucial to its defensive strategy against China's growing military assertiveness.

China's military modernization has significantly impacted India's security calculus, compelling India to rethink its strategic priorities and adapt its defense posture. The growing asymmetry in military capabilities between India and China has made the border conflict more complex and challenging for India. However, India's military modernization, strategic partnerships, and focus on deterrence have ensured that it remains prepared to manage the growing security threat posed by China. As both countries continue to modernize their militaries, the strategic balance in Asia will be continually shaped by the evolving dynamics of the India-China military rivalry.

8. GEOPOLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE INDIA-CHINA BORDER DISPUTE

The India-China border conflict has far-reaching geopolitical implications, both for the two nations and for the broader region, including the Asia-Pacific and beyond. As the world's most populous countries and two emerging global powers, their ongoing territorial disputes over areas like Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh impact not only their bilateral relations but also regional stability, international trade routes, and global strategic alignments.

8.1 Regional Security Dynamics

The India-China border dispute plays a crucial role in shaping South Asian security. India's security concerns are amplified by China's growing presence in South Asia, including its deepening military, economic, and diplomatic ties with India's neighbors such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project within China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), further complicates India's security calculus, as it not only strengthens the China-Pakistan axis but also brings Chinese influence closer to India's borders.

The China-Pakistan nexus has direct implications for India's military strategy. China's military support to Pakistan, particularly in areas like nuclear weapons and missile technology, indirectly impacts India's defense posture. Similarly, China's growing influence in Sri Lanka and its investments in ports and infrastructure, such as the Hambantota Port, strategically positioned in the Indian Ocean, have raised alarm in India about China's expanding footprint in the region. These developments force India to reconsider its regional strategy and heighten its military preparedness along its maritime borders.

8.2 Global Strategic Alignments

The India-China border conflict has also influenced India's foreign policy and strategic partnerships. To counterbalance China's rising power, India has pursued enhanced defense and economic partnerships with like-minded global actors, notably the United States, Japan, and Australia. The establishment of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)—a strategic forum aimed at maintaining a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific—serves as a direct response to China's expanding influence in the region. Through the Quad, India aims not only to challenge China's territorial assertiveness but also to contribute to shaping a global rules-based order that is increasingly threatened by China's growing dominance.

Moreover, China's military modernization and its assertive stance on regional territorial disputes have propelled India to strengthen its military cooperation with countries like Japan and Vietnam, both of which face their own territorial conflicts involving China in the South China Sea. These alliances, while primarily aimed at countering China's regional ambitions, also reflect India's larger strategic objective of maintaining stability in the Indo-Pacific.

8.3 Implications for the Global Economy

The India-China border conflict has significant economic implications due to the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and global trade routes. As the world's largest economies, India and China are key players in international trade. The ongoing border tensions, particularly around the LAC (Line of Actual Control), have the potential to disrupt global trade flows. This is especially critical given that the Indian Ocean serves as a major trade conduit connecting Asia with the Middle East, Africa, and Europe.

China's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean are reflected in its growing investments in ports and infrastructure across the region, including in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and the Maldives. These investments form part of China's broader maritime strategy, aimed at securing critical shipping lanes and strengthening its presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This expansion generates concerns for India, which has traditionally regarded itself as the predominant regional power in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). As a result, India has been bolstering its naval capabilities and seeking closer ties with other countries in the region to safeguard its interests.

8.4 International Impact

The geopolitical significance of the India-China border conflict transcends the Asia-Pacific region, given that both nations hold pivotal roles in global governance, particularly within key institutions such as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the World Trade Organization (WTO)—their dispute affects the larger international order. China's rise as a global power has challenged existing geopolitical structures, with its growing influence in Africa, Latin America, and the South China Sea raising concerns among Western nations, including the United States.

India, for its part, has sought to strengthen its role in global multilateral institutions. India's rise as a democratic counterweight to China's authoritarian model has given it support from Western countries, particularly in trade and security forums. However, the India-China border conflict remains a significant obstacle in India's quest for greater influence in international diplomacy, as any significant military conflict or escalation could have widespread repercussions on global peace and stability.

The India-China border conflict has profound geopolitical implications, shaping the security environment within South Asia and the wider Indo-Pacific region. India's strategic responses to China's growing military power and expanding geopolitical influence continue to influence global diplomatic alignments and economic interactions. As both nations continue to modernize their military capabilities and secure strategic alliances, the border dispute will remain a central issue in their bilateral relations and will continue to influence regional and global security dynamics.

9. CONCLUSION

The India-China border dispute, which is deeply entrenched in historical complexities, continues to shape the security and geopolitical landscape of Asia. Despite numerous attempts at dialogue and diplomacy, the border conflict remains a significant challenge in India-China relations, with ramifications that extend far beyond the immediate territorial issues. India's security policy, characterized by a combination of military preparedness, strategic alliances, and diplomatic engagement, is continually adapting to counter the growing military and economic influence of China. India's approach to the dispute involves balancing deterrence with diplomacy, underscoring the importance of maintaining regional stability while safeguarding its territorial integrity.

China's accelerated military modernization and assertive foreign policy further exacerbate the complexities of the situation, compelling India to strengthen its own defense capabilities, particularly in border regions and the Indian Ocean. In response, India has sought closer ties with like-minded democracies, such as the United States, Japan, and Australia, while enhancing its military infrastructure and regional presence. These moves are not only intended to counter China's regional ambitions but also to secure India's position in an increasingly multipolar world.

The geopolitical implications of the India-China border dispute extend beyond South Asia, influencing global trade, strategic alignments, and international security. As both nations rise as global powers, the dispute will continue to affect not only their bilateral relations but also broader global dynamics. Ultimately, resolving this conflict will require not just military preparedness but also sustained diplomatic efforts, confidence-building measures, and a long-term vision for peace and stability in the region.

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