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"Even as it shuns the BRI, India is recognising that the corridors spreading out from China have connectivity in space and digital domain."

As the second iteration of China's Belt and Road Forum convenes this week in Beijing, India has a strange karma to cope with. Profound concerns about the impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on India's territorial sovereignty and the geopolitics of its immediate neighbourhood compel India to resist its apparent charms. Delhi, which stayed away from the launch of the Forum in 2017 despite considerable pressure from Beijing, has announced that it will sit out again.

Yet, even as it shuns the BRI, India has no choice but to emulate China on connectivity of all kinds. Although India has adopted the mantra of connectivity more than a decade ago, China's BRI has pressed Delhi to get its act together on regional connectivity. The scale of the challenge has also encouraged India to shed its traditional "lone-ranger" mentality and consider working with others, especially Japan, Australia and the United States, in promoting regional connectivity in the Indo-Pacific.

Meanwhile, India is coming to terms with the fact that the BRI is more than two-dimensional. Under the BRI, the "belt" was about overland connectivity and the "road" (in a peculiar twist) referred to the maritime cor-



ridors spreading out from China's eastern seaboard. The additional and inter-related dimensions of BRI are about connectivity in outer space and the digital domain.

Unlike the land and sea corridors, for India, it is not just a question of supporting or rejecting the space and digital silk roads. Delhi finds itself already tied into these initiatives, one way or another. India's deep dependence

on Chinese telecom giants is now a reality. So is the growing reliance of India's neighbours — including Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka — on China's space services. The challenge for Delhi is to expand shall we say, India's "strategic autonomy" in a market that Beijing is poised to dominate.

At the heart of China's space silk road is the BeiDou satellite navigation system. Over the weekend, China launched a satellite for the BeiDou system that is expected to rival the American Global Positioning System (GPS), the Russian GLONASS and the European Galileo. BeiDou will consist of a number of satellites in the geostationary and intermediate earth orbits. The third generation BeiDou system will be operational by next year and is expected to provide better accuracy than the current Western and Russian systems.

Although the first BeiDou system goes back to 2000, it is now being presented as an important component of the Belt and Road Initiative that was launched in 2013. Some analysts have called BeiDou the digital glue that holds the BRI together. By connecting industries and infrastructure projects along the BRI, China's satellite navigation and communication system hopes to dominate the new digital infrastructure in the BRI space. As new ideas for space-based internet services emerge, China is well ahead of the curve. Google, Amazon and SpaceX are all developing projects to provide broadband services around the world through networks of satellites numbering hundreds.

At the end of 2018, China launched the first of its planned constellation 320 satellites in the low-earth orbit. By the end of this year, a network of nine satellites is expected to demonstrate the possibilities for space based internet services. The entire fleet of 320 satellites under the Hongyan project is expected to be operational by 2025. According to media reports, China is putting up a facility in Tianjin to assemble 130 Hongyan satellites annually. The Hongyan mega-constellation is designed to facilitate two-way communications at all times across all terrain, providing a wide range of civilian services such as ground data collection and exchange, ship identification and tracking, mobile broadcasting and navigation signal enhancement.

China has also launched a Big Earth Data initiative that will develop the generation of massive remote-sensing data and commercial products based on it for use across the entire spectrum of sustainable development — from agriculture to disaster management. China is not only into providing space-based services, but is also in the business of exporting satellites to a large number of countries, seeding space-related infrastructure and training space personnel. While China presents these dramatic advances as part of its effort to promote space and digital connectivity through international cooperation, there is no mistaking its geopolitical implications — especially in expanding Beijing's global surveillance and intelligence capabilities, upgrading the PLA's military effectiveness, and a big say in shaping the digital infrastructure of developing nations.

India's space programme too has grown by focusing on modernising national telecommunication, application of remote sensing data for national development and more recently on developing assets for national security. India has a satellite navigation system of its own, the GAGAN. India's remote sensing capability too is impressive. If India has missed a trick it is in the expansive scale that China has brought to its space programme. While the origin and development of both space programmes was led by state entities, China has more recently opened up room for the participation of non-state entities and encouraged private innovators.

As the commercial and geopolitical stakes in outer space grow rapidly, the next government in Delhi has its task cut out: To reform India's space sector to allow private corporations to play a larger role, promote space startups, and rejuvenate India's international space collaboration, both civilian and military — with friends and allies.

Unlike in the traditional Belt and Road projects, India has significant capabilities in the space and digital domains. With policies that will lend them the necessary political support, commercial ambition and organisational scale, Delhi can surely shape the future of space and digital connectivity.

One belt, one road

introduction

- In order to merge two projects of Silk Road Economic belt and Marine Silk Road of 21st Century, 'One Belt, One Road' program was proposed in September 2013.
- The proposed 'one belt, one road' is a \$ 1400 billion project. The goal of completion of the OBOR is 35 years, when the Chinese Republic will celebrate the 100th anniversary of 2049.
- The project with the capacity to reconcile 55 percent of the world's Gross National product (GNP), 70 percent of the population and 75 percent known energy reserves, it is in reality to build a land and sea transportation route, which will connect China's production centers with markets and natural resource centers worldwide.
- Belt corridors will pass through the main bridges in Eurasia, China-Mongolia-Russia, China-Central and West Asia, China-India-China Peninsula, China-Pakistan, Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar.
- The 'belt' here refers to the Silk Road economic belt, which is made up of three land routes - (i) the road connecting China, Central Asia and Europe. (ii) route from China to Middle East and Central Asia via Middle and Western Asia (iii) Road connecting is the way to connect China with Southeast Asia, South Asia and the Indian Ocean.
- 'Road' refers to the 21st century Marine Silk Road, which is being constructed through the South Europe Sea and Indian Ocean to trade in China from the shores of China and through the South China Sea to trade from China to the South Pacific.

China will Mode these web of corridors

- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
- New Eurasian Land Bridge
- China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
- China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor
- Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar economic corridor
- China-Indochina-Peninsulas Economic Corridor

Why is it Important to China?

- Experts believe that the 'one belt, one road' initiative is China's economic diplomacy.
- Experts also believe that China feels lonely as it

is not included in the G-7 and is limited to only BRICS countries.

- They believe that China needed a policy to continue its economic expansion and 'One Belt One Road' initiatives fulfil fully.

Benefits for India

- There is a lack of resources in India today to establish a competitive network. Therefore, it may be appropriate to participate in components of the OBOR which can improve Indian connectivity for supply of basic markets and resources.
- In this, many international financial institutions, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the New Development Bank of BRICS, the Silk Road Fund, the CIC's support fund and possibly the SCO Development Bank are adding to this and also the same as Australia. Support is achieved.
- If India is to become the world's largest economy or the second largest economy by 2050, then it can not be possible without the Asian market being integrated, India should become a partner in the integration of Asian markets and also take advantage of it.

Effect on India

- India's biggest concern is that if China's dream of One Road gets fulfilled, China will undoubtedly emerge as the biggest figure in Asia, which could strike India's ambitions.
- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, is also a part of the OBOR.
- India is constantly protesting against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. In India's eyes, this corridor is going to challenge its sovereignty.
- Through the OBOR, China wants to give new directions to international borders, which has started to do it in South Asia, it will have a direct and adverse impact on India geopolitical purpose are inherent In this initiative of China.

What is a Silk Route?

- Silk Route is known as the trade route of ancient Chinese civilization. Between 200 years BC and 2nd century, the trade of silk was increased during the Han Dynasty regime. Chinese, Arabic, Turkish, Indian, Parsi, Somali, Roman, Syrian and Armenian traders used this silk route for quite a time from the 5th to 8th centuries.
- It is known that not only silk was traded on this route, but all the people associated with it used to

trade their own products like horses etc.

- China occupies a large area of Laddakh, in the west, Pakistan has handed over a major portion of its occupation to China after the 1962 Indo-China war. China's first Sakrakoram infrastructure project Highway in kashmir is the

most popular festival of the sixties.

- Since then, Interference of of China has been growing in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. China's role in the Kashmir dispute has increased due to the linking of the China-Pakistan economic corridor with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Expected Questions (Prelims Exams)

1. Consider the following statements regarding the One Belt, One Road-
 1. It was proposed in 2013 by combining Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road projects..
 2. It has been targeted to be completed in 35 years.
 3. It is a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, which passes through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2
- (b) Only 2
- (c) 1 and 3
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Expected Questions (Mains Exams)

- Q. Considering the increasing international influence of China due to One Belt One Road, what kind of strategy should India adopt? Discuss. (250Words)**

Note: Answer of Prelims Expected Question given on 22 APR. is 1(a)