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Need For International Realism

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This article is based on **“A different view of the world”** which was published in The Indian Express on 01/09//2020. It talks about the importance of realist international foreign policy for India.

The 21st Century has been heralded as the **Asian Century**, with China and India in the vanguard. However, serving national interests gets into conflict with adherence to internationalism by the two countries.

Further, China’s aggressive posturing vis-a-vis India in the recent **galwan valley clash** or under construction **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** (which violates India’s territorial sovereignty) has been a major foreign policy challenge of India.

Thus, as highlighted by India’s External Affairs Minister, the major challenge that India now faces is to manage a more powerful neighbour while ensuring its own rise.

Though Internationalism has always been a key pillar of India’s foreign policy, there is a need for a more realistic foreign policy with respect to China.

Internationalism is a social and political theory, a certain concept of how human society ought to be organized, and in particular a concept of how the nations ought to organize their mutual relations.

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- **Loop-sided Economic Trade:** The advocacy in India of more trade with China has now given way to strong resentment at its one-sidedness.
 - Due to a huge trade deficit India has developed a dependence on Chinese goods.
 - Given this fact, India pulled out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**, as there was a contradiction between India's national commercial interests and a China-led Asian economic regionalism
- **Expansionism of China:** China is behaving like an '**irredentist power**' or '**expansionist power**', seeking to expand its frontiers to the limits that existed in the Qing Dynasty.
 - China has been inclined for long to nibble at territories in the western, middle and eastern segments of the Indian border.
 - Through the **BRI project**, China's intent is to dominate the geostrategic space in its neighbourhood and across Asia & Europe.
- **Increasing Influence of China:** After the Cold War, India re-embraced Asianism in the 1990s when it unveiled the **Look East Policy** and joined the Asian regional institutions led by the **Association of South-East Asian Nations**.
 - This pursuit of economic regionalism in East Asia and emphasis on a multi-polar world had severely underestimated the economic and political consequences of China's rapid rise.
 - This can be depicted by China's policy of containment of India through **Strings of pearls** and CPEC.
- **Undermining of Global Institutions:** The liberal internationalist effort at constructing supra-national institutions that seek to maintain international order, now faces big setbacks.
 - This can be depicted by the growing ineffectiveness of the UN system and Brexit.
 - Also, today strategic coherence of the **Non-Aligned Movement has** declined.

Way Forward: Realist International Policy of India

Realist International Policy in context China would mean that **India should make objective assessments of China's rise and of the gap in comprehensive national power**. It should also envisage bandwagoning with like-minded countries, so to maintain an equilibrium in balance of power and regional peace.

In pursuance of this India can focus on following foreign policy initiatives:

- **Leveraging its Relationship With Western Countries:** India is already a “quasi-ally” of the U.S. and has strategic relationships with many European countries.
 - As there is no scope for reversal, India should use every possible means to prevent China from reaching the Indian Ocean.
 - Strategic convergence between India and countries like the U.S, Japan, Australia, Vietnam, Indonesia is needed to frame a **Indo-Pacific Strategy** and balance China’s military and economic power.
 - **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue** (Quad), can also be extended to include like-minded countries.
 - Also, proposals to expand international organisations such as the **G-7** and include India will be helpful in balancing China’s influence in international affairs.
- **Strengthening Hard Power:** There is an urgent need to strengthen **Mountain Strike Corps divisions** and establish a **theatre command**.
 - This is bound to deter China here far more than the stockpiling of state-of-the-art weapons.
- **Adopting Diplomatic Offensive:** India needs to highlight its peaceful intentions in stark contrast to China’s aggressive policies and tactics.
 - India’s well-designed technical aid programmes not only provide an enduring link between India and other developing countries but are in contrast with Chinese aid whose aims are political and economic subjugation.
 - India can revive NAM to achieve this end.
- **Neighbourhood First Policy:** India must pay particular attention to countries in its neighbourhood, such as Nepal and Bangladesh, and allies such as Iran and Vietnam, which seem to have frayed at the edges with India being more intent on strengthening relations with the West.
 - Smaller countries of Asia, which constantly face China’s aggressive interference in their internal affairs, have not received much support from India, and this needs India’s attention.
- **Leveraging Soft Power:** India should take pole position in propagating ‘**Himalayan Buddhism**’ which China has been seeking to subvert to achieve its ends.
 - India’s credentials here far outweigh that of China’s and should produce excellent dividends.
- **Becoming Self-Reliant:** India urgently needs to increase exports and investments to provide more well-paying jobs, technology, and know-how.
 - Further, in the long run India needs to decouple its economic dependence from Chinese imports and achieve self-reliance.
 - Bold reforms offer the best option to achieve this goal and achieve greater independence on the world stage. The **Atma-Nirbhar Bharat scheme** is a step in the right direction.

Conclusion

Today, the bottom line for the relationship is clear: peace and tranquillity must prevail on the border if the progress made so far is not to be jeopardized. The border and the future of ties cannot be separated.

Thus, India needs more internationalism, than less, in dealing with the Chinese power. But it must be an internationalism that is rooted in realism and tethered to India's economic and national security priorities.

COMPARISON OF REALISM AND LIBERALISM	
<u>REALISM</u>	<u>LIBERALISM</u>
1. States are the only actors at international level.	1. States are not the only actors. Other actors e.g. individuals, IOs, MNCs also play an important role.
2. States are rational actors and aim for their own self interest/ relative gain.	2. States are not rational actors. They aim for absolute gain.
3. Realists believe in maximizing military power in order to achieve peace and security.	3. Liberalists believe that security can be achieved by cooperation, mutual gaining, applying moral/ethical principles.
4. Realists believe in the concept of armament, i.e. states should have arms and weapons for self security.	4. Liberalists believe in the concept of disarmament for self security i.e. cooperation.
5. According to realists international system is anarchic in nature.	5. According to liberalists international system is community based.

Drishti Mains Question

India's China policy must be rooted in international realism which should be tethered to India's economic and national security priorities. Discuss.