

# US-China Trade War: Impact on Sustainable Development in Developing Nations with Particular Reference to South Asia

**Ravi Kumar\***

Ph. D Research Scholar, Department of Politics and International Relations in Central University of Jharkhand, Ranchi, India

\*Corresponding Author: ravikumar0017ds@gmail.com

**Abstract.** The ongoing trade war between the U.S. and China has devastating effects on the developing nations. The trade war is nothing but damaging another country's trade by imposing tariffs and trade barriers on other goods. The impact of this trade war is more intensive to the economy of those nations that are all more integrated with the global economy. The developing countries are most affected by this ongoing trade war between the U.S. and China. Its effects are not only limited to the economic slowdown, but at the same time, it hampers the environment a lot. The trade war is affecting the forest reserve of the amazon basin and the sub-Saharan desert, which is known as the lung of earth. At the same time, excessive industrialization causes wide-scale deforestation and desertification in developing and developed countries due to the rise of carbon. This study mainly focuses on the US-China trade war and its impact on the economies of the developing nations with the particular reference of south Asian countries. Meanwhile, this research work will also analyze its adverse effects on the environment.

**Index Terms:** Developing Nations, Trade Barrier, Economic Slowdown, Deforestation, Desertification, Global Warming, Climate Change

## I. INTRODUCTION

After the end of the cold war in the 1990s, the USA became unipolar, and for a long decade, no country was there to challenge the supremacy of the USA. Books like End of history and the Last Man(1992) by Francis Fukuyama, End of ideology by Daniel Bell(1960), Clash of Civilization (1996)by Samuel .P. Huntington and many more philosophers echoed the supremacy of the USA in the world community. All of these denote that the only country is the flagbearer of capitalism at that time. During this time, the USA mainly focuses on free trade worldwide to establish its hegemony through the international organisation WTO, IMF. On the other hand, the cultural revolution and the phase of Globalization, many third world countries emerged at the world forum. In his book 'Return of History and the End of Dream,(1996)' Robert Kegan rightly pointed out the emergence of third-world countries like India, China, Iran, and other third-world countries. These countries are challenging the unipolarity of the USA since the breakdown of the USSR. Before the emergence of countries like China, India, and Iran, developed countries like the USA, Britain, France used to import raw materials from these developing and underdeveloped countries. At the same time, finished goods were dumped in the developing countries. These activities destroy the

small industries of the developing nations as pointed out by the A.R. DESAI in his book "Social background of Indian History (1948)" how the Britishers exploited the resources of South Asia for 200 years and played an essential role in the destruction of the small-scale industry of India, China and other third world nation by putting high tariff barrier on their goods and decreasing the tariff barrier from their finished products. At the same time, China, too, was the culprit of the same thing. When Britain opened China for trade, the whole world distributed China like watermelon. It exploited their resources at mass level America too was part of the exploiter.

As rightly explained in his book "Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America: Historical Studies of Chile And Brazil(1967)" coined Dependency theory by Andre Gunder Frank that the developed country exploited the resources of the underdeveloped country, and to establish their hegemony at the world level, their intention towards the development of these countries is negligible. Britishers justified their Colonisation by arguing that they were the only civilized nation; their rule would ultimately civilize the third world countries. So, during that period of colonization, Britishers were the flag bearers of the civilized race. They were ruling to civilize others, whereas they exploited the resources at most. The same USA took the flag of Democracy, Capitalism, and Globalization in the era of indirect Colonisation. However, this time the USA was trapped in its den as Globalization started threatening its supremacy in China. What colonial rulers did during colonization the same USA is doing in the phase of

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Globalization. However, at the time of colonization, both sides were controlled by the colonial masters. Therefore, in the era of Globalization, everyone is the master of its commodity. Even a tiny country knows how to protect its interest above all in the race for advanced technology, trade. Major powers were trying to establish their hegemony by side-lining the environmental concern. They are doing deforestation to develop more industries and emit carbon at a high level, which threatens many countries' survival. It will increase the water level in the ocean. However, at the same time, it is deteriorating the quality of water, air and even making the desertification of land that led to the outbreak of diseases like Bronchitis, Asthma, etc. Lung Cancer, and many more.

In the globalized world, China emerges as the competitor of the USA in the manufacturing goods, which is challenging the hegemony of a developed nation. The method which was adopted by the European colonial master China is doing the same with developing nations. The USA forgot the Boston tea party incidence and the measures adopted by them to overcome the British supremacy in their country. The famous "quote of no taxation without representation (1761)" was the challenge of British superiority over the USA. The USA under which pressure the WTO ready to adopt the policy of Globalization, and now the two major manufacturing countries are violating the rules and regulation of UNCTAD and WTO at a high level to satisfy the interest of their country.

### **Background of US-China Trade**

In 2017, China's overall trade surplus was 422.5 billion US\$ with a 7.9 percent jump in exports and a 15.9 percent rise in imports. Nevertheless, in 2016 China's overall trade surplus was 509 billion US\$, so there was a sharp decline in China's overall trading engagement in the following year.

In 2018 U.S. and China's overall bilateral trade was estimated at 737.1 billion US\$. Exports were 179.3 billion US\$; imports were 557.9 US\$ billion. The U.S. trade deficit with China was 378.6 billion US\$ in 2018<sup>1</sup>. After the Trump administration in the USA was mainly focused on minimizing its trade deficit with China. Therefore, the USA put a trade barrier mainly on steel (25%) and aluminium (10%) imported from China based on section 232 of the expansion act of 1962. At the same time, China retaliated and increased the tariff barrier on the imported product of the USA. This was mainly on the grains and soya milk, meat, and other products of the same value, on which the U.S. increased the tariff.

The United Nations believes in the competition and the protectionist behaviour of the two largest trading countries of the world, taking the world towards the trade war among the developed and developing nations.

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<sup>1</sup>Office of the United States Trade Representative (2019). The People's Republic of China Available at <https://ustr.gov/countries-regions/china-mongolia-taiwan/peoples-republic-china>\_Accessed on August 2, 2021

Growing trade wars between the U.S. and China took the world towards the new cold war and the steps were taken by the USA to revisit the North American Free-Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as the United -States Mexico Canada Agreements (USMCA) as the milestone agreement that world is again moving towards the regional block. In 2018, when the USA announced the No-Trade policy with Iran and warned also other countries not to trade with Iran; otherwise, the government can face problems with relations. At the same time, China started attracting the developing nation by following different strategies like spreading its business in the third world nations and creating its soft power diplomacy and depth trap diplomacy. The depth trap is a diplomatic tool of China. It makes puppet countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, Srilanka, Maldives, African countries, and Central Asian countries where China starts vibrantly spreading its wings by using this diplomatic tool. China began to extract resources from underdeveloped countries and make them dependent on Chinese products. They enjoy the profit, but the developing country cannot extract their resources due to technical and financial support. Chinese companies extract resources and also do not follow rules and regulations for protecting the environment of the particular country wherever they establish their project. Their main aim is to gain profit wherever they go. Most of the Central Asian countries and African countries are examples of this.

In the globalized world, where the world is moving towards economic integration, the trade war between the USA and China hampers the trade stability of the different nations and the region. The countries that try to establish their trade supremacy start making new blocs by violating the norms and rules of world trade organizations. The trade war between the U.S. and China affects the whole world and slows down the economy of all the countries of the world. there is a slowdown of the gross domestic product of the developing nations, the increase of inflation in the south Asian region, and unemployment in these developing countries.

### **IMPACTS OF TRADE WAR BETWEEN USA AND CHINA ON DEVELOPING NATIONS**

#### **IMPACT OF TRADE WAR IN LATIN AMERICA**

The trade war between the USA and China on the Latin American countries has sound and harmful effects on the economy, environment, and agriculture of the South American nations. It is a known fact that Brazil and Argentina are the third major exporter of soybean seeds in the world .when China puts a tariff on the American soybean, the Latin American country got the opportunity to export soya in China. So they buy /import the American soybeans. However, in the meantime, the Chinese government reduces the demand due to the illness of white pigs in China, and soya is one of the main fodder to the Chinese pig. This creates the condition of surplus amount of soya in the south American country, which badly affects the farmer due to the less demand of the Agri product, which in turn

affects ordinary people; most of the trade war started between U.S. and China when the U.S. announced in April 2018 that it would impose 25% tariff on the roughly U.S. \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods from aircraft to chicken incubators. (Lawdar, 2018).

The taxes were applied in two phases. The first phase of restrictions from July 6, 2018, on 818 Chinese goods worth U.S. \$34 billion. The second phase during which, an additional 25% tariff was levied on 279 goods worth another \$16 billion, came into effect from August 23, 2018. These tariffs were imposed due to China's unfair trade practices related to the forced transfer of U.S. technology and intellectual property. (USTR 2018) China retaliated against the U.S. decision by imposing similar duties on 333 goods of U.S. origin worth the U.S. \$16 billion w.e.f August 23, 2018. The list of 333 items includes commodities such as coal, copper scrap, fuel, buses, and medical equipment.

China raised the issue with the WTO dispute settlement body (Tan 2018). According to the IMF that such retaliatory policies will slow down the global growth by 0.5 percent by 2020, or about \$430bn in lost GDP worldwide (Partington, 2018). This trade dispute will have a detrimental effect on the economies of both countries. However, it will open the door for countries like India to penetrate deeper into the U.S. and Chinese markets. The Latin American country is dependent on agriculture, so unemployment prevails, which is putting a threat on the stability of the government. The South American country identified approximately 1000 products, but the problem arises on one side they will export the goods to the USA and China. On the other side, they are in fear that their Chinese counterpart flood their market with cheap products which will affect their market in South America. This will affect the industrial production of the country at large. The environment is also affected due to the trade war. There is a threat to the great Amazon rainforest. These are losing the earth's most enormous treasure once it covered 14% of its land surface, but now, they cover only 6 percent of its surface. Environmental scientists estimated that the remaining of the forest could be consumed in less than 40 years. In recent year's deforestation in the Amazon basin, which is known as the lungs of the earth, has increased rapidly due to commercial farming and to make the grassland graze animals to fulfil the demand for meat and other products. the deforestation of the amazon basin not only harm the condition of the air and water condition of south American countries, but also it affects the whole world, it increases the melting of the glaciers. It too increases the ratio of carbon in the air, which causes different respiratory diseases. It worsens the living condition on the earth. It has too caused the extinction of other living organisms found in the Amazon basin, which will also hamper the life cycle.

#### **IMPACTS OF TRADE WAR ON AFRICAN COUNTRIES**

The African continent has a group of 54 nations with a population of approximately 130 crores. These countries

are highly underdeveloped and mainly dependent on developed countries like the USA, China, Russia, etc..., and developing countries like India, Bangladesh, etc. Some African countries play an essential role in these regions having greater GDP and economic stability than their counterparts, such as South Africa, Ethiopia, Libya, Egypt, etc. Chinese and American dominance in the African country can be seen vibrantly. China also uses its depth trap diplomacy in this region in an exquisite manner. It is well-known that African countries have ample amounts of gas, oil, gold, and silver reserves, so they try to exploit Africa because they know that they can quickly enter African countries because of the undulation of hunger and unemployment. Due to this trade war, African countries also try to come out with the depth trap diplomacy of China. However, on the other hand, they are dependent upon Chinese financial aid. African countries have the producer of food and cotton textiles. At the time of the trade war, it could supply to America. At the same time, the Chinese government flooded the African market with Chinese goods, which threatened the industrialization of the African country. On the eve of the trade war, the sub-Saharan forest was also cleared to make its agricultural land and to use the land for industrial purposes. Most of the projects are running in the African country by China. They heavily cut the forests to make roads establish the industry. To minimize the loss of trade war by flooding the African country with their goods. However, in the name of development, China exploits precious resources and hampers the environment by doing the mass level of deforestation on the sub-Saharan forest. People of Africa benefit from the trade war between the two largest manufacturing countries by hampering their environment. They may get profit, but they are putting their future in danger.

#### **IMPACTS OF TRADE WAR IN SOUTH ASIA**

South Asia comprises the 8-country having one-fourth world population, making it the most populous and densely populated region. This region includes the Himalayan ranges, and on the other side, it comprises the Indian ocean. This region has the world's most extensive fertile plain known as the Indo-Gangetic plain. Most of the population of this region is dependent upon the Agro-based industry. The trade war between the U.S. and China directly influences this region because China is the neighbouring country of South Asia and separately affects these countries.

#### **NEPAL**

Nepal is a country lying between India and China that plays a great importance to both nations. It is also known as the buffer state. Analyzing the situation in the present scenario, the Chinese dominance in Nepal can be seen at a mass level. After the communist government in Nepal, most of the project was shifted towards China. The Chinese government is treating Nepal as its tool to counter India. Therefore, Nepal has benefited from the trade war between China and the USA, but it is only for short time. On the eve of the trade war, China started

flooding the market of Nepal with the Chinese automobile parts and technologies exported to the USA. They may get cheap products, but this will spoil their industry and agriculture and threaten their future development. China, in recent years, working on different projects which drastically affected the environment in the country. Nepal is located on the side of the Himalayan region. The Himalayan glaciers are melting very rapidly due to global warming. The mining activities, deforestation, and the construction process in the mountain will increase the melting of the glaciers. The expansionist policy of China is also a threat to Nepal that the time may come when Nepal disappears on the map of the world and becomes a part of China as a whole.

### **BHUTAN**

Bhutan is a landlocked country between India and China, sharing its border with the five Indian states. Bhutan has its trade relationship with the USA, China, India Germany, but till 2018 India was its largest trading partner. However, after the election in 2018, the government elected is pro-China. This government came into power with their manifesto in which they promised to decrease the dependency from India as 80 % of the Bhutanese trade was dependent on India. At the same time, it side-lined the border issue. After the invitation of the Bhutanese government in 2018, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Mr Kong Xuanyou visits Bhutan and discussed the geographical issues for the first time. At the same time, the Chinese counterpart invited the Bhutanese govt to the Chinese spring festival with a delegation to perform there. The Bhutanese government wants to reduce the trade engagement with India. They pointed out that their engagement with India is hydropower which does not generate much employment. Most of the youths are unemployed .at the same time Chinese government play its soft power diplomacy by giving funds and giving scholarship to the Bhutanese students .somehow they try to attract an Asian counter past to fill their loss in the trade war and with a newly elected government in Bhutan they got fertile land for this. With this, the Chinese government started dumping technologies and automobiles in the Bhutanese market. Bhutan also gave its permission for the belt and road initiative. However, it will highly affect the environment in Bhutan.

### **MALDIVES**

The Maldives is an island country in the Arabian Sea of the Indian ocean. The geographical location of Maldives is the most important from the strategic aspect for both India and China in the Indian Ocean. It is also crucial for China for its Belt and Road initiative. Chinese government In the Yemen government were the maximum project carrier in the Maldives. After the defeat of Yemen in the recent election, the new government called a meeting to revise the Chinese project, which was a significant loss for China. However, before the election, the Chinese company dumped their product after starting the trade war. China is still the top

importing partner of the island country with a total of \$274 million. On the one hand, where China exports steel aluminium vehicle's cars and other items, Maldives export only the fish items no matter the Maldives will be benefited from the trade war as they got cheaper Chinese products. However, they must pay in another form because China cannot provide anything free.

### **SRILANKA**

Srilanka is an island state in the Indian ocean which is strategically very important for both countries. The newly elected government of Srilanka is pro-China. Srilanka benefits from the trade war between the USA and China because Srilanka is the major exporter of women's undergarments, t-shirts, and tea. Therefore, Srilanka buys these things from China at minimal rates exports them to the USA. It will benefit the economy of Srilanka.

### **BANGLADESH**

Bangladesh is a South Asian country embedded in India and the other sides of the Indian ocean. It is benefitted from the trade war between China and the USA because Bangladesh is the most significant exporter of men's clothing. The USA-Bangladesh increased the tariff barrier on the Chinese cloths to import Chinese products. On the other hand, Bangladesh is also an exporter of animal meat. China has increased the tariff on the USA animal meat so Bangladesh can increase their export with China.

### **PAKISTAN**

Pakistan is a South Asian country with the sixth-largest populous country in the world. After 2000 the graph of the Pakistan economy is declining rapidly.

Nowadays, the whole world isolated Pakistan due to its terrorist activity in the Indian territory. Pakistan also gives shelter to a terrorist like Osama Bin Laden, Daud Ibrahim, and many more. However, after all these activities, China supports Pakistan. After the formation of Imran's government, Pakistan's condition worsened, Pakistan was trapped under the depth trap of China. At the same time, the American government stopped giving aid to Pakistan. Pakistan is a great supporter of China's belt and road initiative.

### **INDIA**

India is a south Asian country having a significant trade relationship with the different countries of the world. India has the second-largest population in the world after China. India acts as the elder brother in the South Asian region, having good trade relations with its neighbouring country. India has very high economic engagement with China, which is about to cross \$100 billion. India can benefit from this trade war between US-China and exporting engineering appliances, steel, aluminium, and automobile parts. At the same time, India can also reduce its trade deficit with China by supplying the grains and other items on which China increases the tax barrier. On the other hand, the trade barrier also decreases the value

of rupees. India's economy is the fastest-growing economy in the world.

## II. CONCLUSION

The ongoing trade war between China-US may prove beneficial for the economic growth in South Asia; nevertheless, the trade war between them harms the environment and biodiversity in South Asia. As the concluding points. First, China is taking an aggressive policy on its dream project, Belt and Road initiative, to connect Central Asia and join the African region through Silk Route. However, China ignored the environmental issues associated with BRI like deforestation and the melting of Himalayan glaciers and started mining on the courtyard of the Himalayas that have a devastating effect on the ecology of South Asia. Second, the road initiative comes with the promises of employment generation in developing societies. However, only the Chinese companies benefit from this BRI. Third, At present, it appears quality products are getting cheaper but at the same time they are not caring about the industrial development of their own country. Fourth, despite China's Debt trap diplomacy being already exposed, many developing countries are not aware of the ill consequences of debt-trap diplomacy of China. Fifth, The growing relations among China, Nepal, and Bhutan are rapprochements of China's expansionist policy.

Many problems like scarcity of water threaten the globe, and South Asia is greatly affected by this. The UNFCCC report highlights that the Himalayan glaciers are melting so rapidly that they will end by 2050. In this regard, Professor Brahma Chalani rightly said that the third world war would occur due to the scarcity of water. Major powers and the developing nations should come together to counter these global issues through multilateral engagement.

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