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The United States in 2017 seems to be falling into the same trap of the decade of the 2000s wherein US Middle East-predominant policy focus enabled China's military rise threatening American predominance in East Asia.

The United States policy establishment should recall that the Korean War of the 1950s involved North Korea and China entering into an armed conflict with the United States despite American unsurpassed military predominance. In 2017 too, one sees an unfolding of North Korea unrestrained by China as its strategic patron and nuclear weapons technology supplier egging by proxy North Korea towards an inevitable armed conflict with the United States. Inevitably, China and North Korea seem destined for a clash of arms with the United States over North Korea's nuclear weapons whose origin is Chinese.

China exploited the first decade of the 21st Century when the United States created a policy vacuum in East Asia by its strategic distractions in Afghanistan and Iraq. China exploited the American strategic inattentiveness to Asia Pacific security in that decade to plot and put in place China's emergence as a major naval power and also to establish predominant control over the South China Sea conflictual maritime expanse without any matching restraint imposed by United States power predominance.

The major collateral damage attendant on the above was the United States insensitivity and over-riding strategic interests of its allies like Japan, South Korea and the Philippines to placate the Chinese from generating mischief.

However, the major collateral damage to United States national security interests in that decade was that the United States was forced into the dubious policy option of combining a 'China Hedging Strategy' with a 'Risk Aversion Strategy' when it came to facing China's aggressive

brinkmanship in the South China Sea conflicts with its less powerful neighbours. This major limitation of the United States led to a strategic diminution of American stature in Asian capitals.

Former US President Obama belatedly indulged in a damage limitation exercise of the 'US Strategic Pivot to Asia Pacific' to signal the American resolve to stay committed to Asia Pacific security. That effort was impeded by Congressional sequestrations on the US defence budget. The result was China's greater South China Sea conflict escalation and creation of Chinese fortified artificial islands which could affect US naval predominance in Western Pacific.

In 2017, with new US President Donald Trump in office, the United States seems to be headed falling into the same trap as the previous US Presidents in the first decade of the 21st Century. Instead of nipping in the bud North Korea's nuclear weapons challenge threatening United States and its allies, President Trump seems to be getting sucked into the Middle East quagmire by ordering missile strikes against Syrian Air Force bases accused of chemical strikes.

This would again lead to a colossal repeat of American mistakes in creating policy vacuum focused on China, and North Korea to deal with their strategic gauntlets thrown at the United States under their impression that the United States accords a greater policy priority to the Middle East than East Asia and Asia Pacific.

In 2017, the United States cannot afford to let grow China's unrestrained military rise to a status of military equivalence with the United States and also allow a China free run to its North Korea proxy to endanger Asia Pacific security.

At the first instance President Trump should not have invited the Chinese President Xi to the United States or a so-called Super-Summit. Secondly President should have not accepted the Chinese President's invitation to President Trump to visit China in 2017. These steps should have been delayed by President Trump and his advisers to be cogent on China showing greater accommodation to United States sensitivities on North Korea and the South China Sea military build-up.

That the above has not happened betrays the trend in the making that President Trump is also inclined to adopt the erstwhile United States policies towards China of 'China Hedging' and 'Conflict Aversion'. Once again, the United States seems to be doomed to create a US policy and strategic vacuum in the Asia Pacific so as to placate China. Such American timidity to face-off China and its transgressions can ultimately lead China to success in prompting a US-Exit from the Western Pacific endangering US Homeland Security and laying bare the United States to Chinese and North Korean nuclear missiles threats.

Essentially, the United States keeps falling into the Chinese geopolitical trap because of the inability of the United States policy establishment's to discern as to which is the major threat to the United States, Russia or China? Arguing for over a decade and half in my writings and in my book on China last year, I have consistently pointed out that China is United States "Enemy Number One" and further that

China is a more potent, dangerous and unpredictable threat to the United States, than Russia.

Simply, because comparatively, the United States and Russia have a shared history in managing a bipolar world with a predictability template to work on during the Cold War days. China on the other hand has only a historical conflictual record with the United States including a full-fledged War in the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s when the United States was the sole nuclear weapons power and China a primitive massed manpower force. China in 2017 is a revisionist power with only one stake in global affairs and that is to shatter United States predominance especially in Asia Pacific.

Concluding, the strategic choice is that of the United States to neutralise China and North Korea acting in tandem to undermine United States security or get lost in the Middle East quagmire that should be allowed to fester until such time it hits grievously those regional nations who generated and supported the Syrian Civil War. The United States has no viable option but to restrain, if not contain, China's military brinkmanship in Indo Pacific through its proxies North Korea and Pakistan.

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