

South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > China's Strategic Vulnerabilities make it Assailable

China's Strategic Vulnerabilities make it Assailable

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Tue, 03/20/2018 - 05:57

Paper No. 6357

Dated 20-Mar-2018

By Dr Subhash Kapila

China in the 21st Century may have a mighty military machine and a threatening missiles arsenal capable of hitting Continental United States but the Great Wall of China on land and the Great Sea Wall of artificially constructed & fortified islands in South China Sea still have not made China unassailable

China may have a 21st Century Emperor President Xi Jinping presiding over a formidable military machine and since 2013 got away with its military adventurism but China's very pursuit of the Great Chinese Dream enunciated by its now life-long President have added increasingly to its strategic vulnerabilities.

The Indian policy establishment and its associated intelligence agencies should focus on study of China's strategic vulnerabilities and keep them under close scrutiny as such China vulnerabilities can be suitably be exploited to off-set China's preponderant military power.

China in 2018 as a 'revisionist power' on an impatient trajectory to gain trappings of a Superpower has generated a strategic polarisation within Asia and a similar reaction at the global level. What the United States could not achieve through diplomacy for decades, China by its threatening moves and military brinkmanship has handed it over on a plate to the United States.

China's strategic and military might have been overblown both on scale and magnitude I suspect by the US Pentagon to persuade US Congress to release greater amounts of defence spending sequestered for long by Congressional restraints.

Admittedly, China as compared to a decade back has a mighty military force capable of exerting political and military blackmail and coercion

on its peripheral borders but it still lacks both force projection and force configurations to mount operations even upto the Gulf Region or on the scale that the United States and Russia can do.

Objective assessment of Chinese military power in simplistic terms rather than the complex formulas devised by China to measure Comprehensive Military Power of its adversaries should necessarily take into account China's geopolitical and strategic vulnerability imposed by China's security environment. It is not a simple derivation of its military capabilities and its aggressive impulses.

In terms of geopolitical vulnerabilities, China stands located between two mighty nations of United States and Russia. Also to add to this complexity is China's underbelly of China Occupied Tibet facing a Subcontinental power like India.

China and the United States are in a Cold War confrontation in 2018 and the same could be stated of China and India. Russia may be in a strategic nexus with China, but it is only a tactical expedient.

China's maritime flank on the Pacific littoral is studded with nations in varying stages of military alliance with the United States. Maritime polarisation against China has emerged strongly against China after its South China Sea military aggression. Japan is an Emerged Power strongly allied with United States and its security architecture in Asia Pacific.

In terms of geopolitical sub regions of Asia, China is friendless.. In East Asia, other than North Korea, the rest of the region is not favourably disposed towards China. In South East Asia, China may have succeeded in dividing ASEAN but overall other than Cambodia and to some extent Thailand, China cannot count on anyone after its military imperialism in South China Sea.

South Asia presents a serious geopolitical challenge to China despite the emergence of the China-Pakistan Axis and foisting a "Two Front Military Threat" to India as an arch rival of China. China perceptibly may seem to have gained ground in Nepal, a toehold in Sri Lanka and a tight grip over the Maldives. It is targeting a Chinese embrace of Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Other than Pakistan, China cannot sustain its influence on its gains in South Asia by economic doles to poor economies. The fabric stitched by China in South Asia is fraying, including Pakistan where the average Pakistani is questioning Pakistan Army's furthering China's gains at the expense of China's 'colonisation' of Pakistan.

China is not the dominating power in South Asia. It has to contend with an India engaged in reducing power differential with China. China however has been able to achieve two major geopolitical objectives placing it at an advantage in South Asia, namely:

- China till lately was able to limit India geopolitically within South Asian confines. But with PM Modi coming into power in mid-2014, India has broken out on the larger Asian and global stage.
- China by its concubinage relationship with Pakistan and forging a China-Pakistan Axis has imposed a Two-Front War military threat

on India. Here again under PM Modi and his Government to put India's war preparedness on a war footing after abject neglect during the previous Government 2004-2014, India is confident to battle a Two Front War from the China-Pakistan Axis.

In the Middle East, China is no game-changer with a power tussle in the region ongoing between the United States and Russia.

Overall, in Asia, despite China's exponential military expansion the balance of power geopolitically is stacked against China with the US military alliances and US strategic partnerships with countries like Japan, South Korea, India and Australia.

In the strategic domains, China stands greatly limited against the geopolitical and military coalitions opposing it. China in the absence of major countervailing power on its side is unable to bring 'Force Multipliers' on its side. Russia is considered by China as its satellite nation and with the Russians claiming that the so-called Russia-China strategic nexus was only quasi-strategic in nature and content.

China's internal security and domestic political environment cannot be said to ideally imparting comprehensive strengths to China against a virtually isolated China and where China-generated military turbulences on its peripheries can haunt and challenge its internal cohesion.

China's border regions like Xinjiang and Tibet are in a state of unrest evidenced by China's larger outlays on internal security budget outweighing its external security expenditures for the last two years.

With the slowing down of the Chinese economy and reduction in China's manufacturing exports, domestic discontent is bound to grow with reduced incomes and unemployment. Added to this is the danger lurking of violent disturbances likely to be generated by thousands of senior Party officials, Army Generals and others convicted on false charges of corruption to remove those opposing President Xi Jinping's ascendancy to unprecedented hold on China's political and military power.

On balance therefore, one finds an explosive mix of internal security and domestic unrest waiting to be ignited by a solitary incendiary spark originating externally or internally, or both.

Each of these strategic vulnerabilities outlined in brief but when amplified in detail would indicate assessments that China despite its over-rated military power for various reasons has under-rated strategic vulnerabilities which limit its space and freedom for unrestrained political and military adventurism. But then has not the world witnessed that in the situation in which China is moving as visible in 2018 has resulted in Hitlerian aggression when thwarted in the "revisionist impulses" and in this case President Xi Jinping's "Great China Dream."

India which is the most prominent target in China's strategic and military cross-hairs has to be most seriously concerned as what stands in-between Chinese President's "Great China Dream" realisation is India as the most serious contender.

India's war-preparedness against a China-Pakistan imposed "Two Front War" scenarios must be placed on a fast-track mode and the Indian

policy establishment not lulled into complacency of an under-emphasised or de-emphasised 'China Threat' by certain sections in the Indian policy establishment.

Concurrently, the Indian policy establishment should minutely scrutinise China's strategic vulnerabilities so that these could be exploited by India to off-set the power asymmetry with China.

In a brief conclusion, what needs to be reiterated is that China is not as unassailable as made out to be by strategic analysts. China has equally prominent strategic vulnerabilities which sap its mighty machine in the ultimate analysis. As far as India is concerned, it should shed its 1962 Syndrome and with a national political unanimity that China has to be comprehensively be "Stood Upto" without seeking escapist routes of easy options---- a noticeable propensity in the civilian element managing India's security.

Tags:

[china](#) ^[1]

[india](#) ^[2]

[China-India Nexus](#) ^[3]

[China-US Relation](#) ^[4]

[China-Russia Relation](#) ^[5]

Category:

[Papers](#) ^[6]

Countries:

[United States](#) ^[7]

[Pakistan](#) ^[8]

[Russia](#) ^[9]

[China](#) ^[10]

Topics:

[Strategic Affairs & Security](#) ^[11]

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

Source URL: <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2275>

Links

- [1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/6>
- [2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/9>
- [3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1865>
- [4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1866>
- [5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1867>
- [6] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>
- [7] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/united-states>
- [8] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/pakistan>
- [9] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/russia>
- [10] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/china>
- [11] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/strategic-affairs-and-security>