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Strategic myopia of the United States on the verge of the third decade of the 21st Century and wherein lie United States hardest strategic choices in 2019 is the inability to recognise that its global strategies and especially those on Indo Pacific security need to be crafted to deal with the 'China Threat' and not with the 'Russia Threat' persisting as Cold War hangover.

Comparatively, in 2019, Russia does not pose a massed land threat to US interests in either Europe or in Asia Pacific. In 2019, it is China that poses not only a land threat in Heartland Asia to US security interests but more potently an ever increased naval threat to the United States global predominance resting on both the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean.

Hard choices stare glaringly at United States in 2019 and that is that the real challenge to United States policy establishment and its security establishment is not one of 'Managing China' but one of 'China Checkmating' from unobtrusive but sustained chipping away at US security architecture in the Western Pacific and United States evolving a strong and unambiguous security template for Indo Pacific security and stability.

'Managing China' strategy has cost the United State heavily both in geopolitical and in strategic terms. The most notable strategic loss for the United States being the passivity in letting China chip away at United States undisputed sway over the South China Sea maritime expanse In 2019, China has established 'Full Spectrum Dominance' over the South China Sea endangering US military predominance in the Western Pacific and in Indian Ocean.

The political costs of US 'Managing China' strategy was United States according primacy to China's strategic sensitivities over the more

pressing strategic sensitivities of Japan and India as the pivots of US Indo Pacific Security template as they coped with the China threat, in geographical proximity of China. At times this has led to heartburning and exasperation in Tokyo and New Delhi. As reflected in my past SAAG papers this led to misgivings that US security policies were operating on two separate planes. The first was egging Japan and India to cater for the rising China Threat and superimposed over it was a global US strategy of pandering to China at the expense of its strategic allies and partners in Indo Pacific Asia.

‘China Checkmating Strategy’ is an inescapable imperative of US global strategy in 2019 to preserve its global predominance. It calls for jettisoning US strategic ambiguities on China and whole heartedly embracing (without political China-permissive policies) and integrating the security templates of Japan and India China Threat-specific strategies and security preparedness in the overall US global strategy.

In my assessment United States global predominance will prevail through the 21st Century. But if the United States does not seriously engage in ‘China Checkmating Strategy’ then vulnerabilities exist for the United States in China chipping away, bit by bit, at US strategic superiorities and thereby reducing its military differentials with the United States. Russia strategically spurned by United States policy planners not co-opting it in global security management would be happily a passive bystander in the China Threat challenge to the United States.

Contextually therefore, ‘China Checkmating Strategy’ of the United States has to operate at two levels. One, of global approaches and the second, more in terms of brass-tacks of ‘China Checkmating’ in the Indo Pacific.

Global level US policy approaches on ‘China Checkmating’ need a deliberate and calibrated reset of US policy approaches on Russia. Even at the height of the Cold War, the United States and Russia in a bipolar world managed global security without or limiting dangers of a global armed conflict. Russia does not carry any baggage of direct armed conflict with the United States unlike China when it militarily overran the Korean Peninsula in the 1950s when US was the unipolar nuclear weapons power.

There is no reason why the United States in similar fashion draws away Russia from its enforced strategic proximity to China as a reaction to US policy indifferences. Reflected in my earlier writings was the assessment that in the event of a military showdown between the United States and China at any future date, it can be expected that Russia would not militarily side with China.

As an aside, one would hazard the guess that more than Russia it could be China that interfered in the last US presidential elections as China at no cost wished Hillary Clinton to emerge as US President because of her hard line stances on China.

The United States should also assiduously co-opt the European Union and especially France, Germany and UK to seriously shed their ambiguities on China as part of the global effort to checkmate China. Indications are already emerging in this direction. The United States should prevail over NATO countries not to join China's OBOR project as Italy is reported to be doing so.

The Indo Pacific expanse is in China's strategic and military crosshairs as it is in this wide geographical landmass and maritime expanse that China can generate the full potential of its considerable conventional military land power and its burgeoning naval power. Japan and India as United States pivot strategic ally/partner figure prominently in China's strategic crosshairs. In Chinese perspectives it is Japan and India that in 2019 provide strategic ballast to United States predominance in Indo Pacific.

China at both ends of Indo Pacific region has established nuclear weapons rogue states as its proxies. North Korea emerges as China's proxy to tie down Japan and similarly Pakistan figures even higher than North Korea in Chinese strategy to tie down India within South Asian confines and thereby arrest India's geopolitical rise. Over and above, the building up of their nuclear weapons arsenal and long range missiles delivery means. China has tacitly egged on and been permissive on Pakistan's use of Jihadi Terrorism as an instrument of Pakistan's asymmetric challenge to India.

These facts are well known in Washington but because of US 'Managing China' strategy of earlier years the United States looked the other way just to not to roil China and Willy nilly contributed to China's creation of its nuclear proxies. The United States did not realise that China's larger aim of creation of nuclear weapons proxy states in the form of North Korea and Pakistan had the United States targeting as the long range view.

However, in recent years and especially around 2013 when China switched over to exercise of 'Hard Power' strategies the United States became belatedly alive to the prospect that China's military rise was not all that benign and was assuming threatening contours affecting vital US national security interests. Previous US President Obama heralded the switch in his 'Strategic Pivot to Asia Pacific'.

Present US President Trump went in for a wider encompassing of United States strategic vision of now checkmating China by enunciating the 'Indo Pacific Security Template'. The earlier American strategic focus resting on Bay of Bengal stood now widened to encompass the Arabian Sea and the Western littoral of the Indian Ocean.

This was a remarkable recognition of the United States according a leading pivotal role in the Indo Pacific Security template. In line with this strategic thinking the United States recently re-designated the US Pacific Command headquartered in Hawaii as US Indo Pacific Command.

US -India Strategic Partnership consequently stands greatly intensified in the security sphere. United States and India have proceeded ahead with interoperability of US and India Forces, Trilateral naval exercises involving US-Japan -India. United States security ties with

Japan is more than half a century old and time-tested. Japan and India too have intensified their Special Global and Strategic Partnership with substantial military contours.

The above security initiatives of the United States in integrating Japan and India into an effective strategic coalition which existentially would impose some likely deterrence on China's hegemonistic designs over Asia but what is noticeable and detracts from the above are United States formulations on North Korea and Pakistan.—the two vassal states of a belligerent China, both posing destabilising threats to Indo Pacific security.

The United States recent initiatives to engage North Korea on a one-to-one basis were ill advised. The two US-North Korea Summits between President Trump and the North Korean President made no headway. The engaging of the North Korean President by US President was optically disastrous as it placed the US President of the mightiest nation on the same pedestal as the President of the puny vassal state of China. This should cease. Stringent economic sanctions, short of war, accompanied by geopolitical pressures to be amplified by US Allies, namely Japan and South Korea should be the fundamentals of US strategy in East Asia.

US President Trump has taken hard-line decisions on Pakistan in terms of cutting off military aid till such time Pakistan shows visible proof of not providing safe havens within Pakistan for launching of Jihadi terrorist attacks and suicide bombings on its neighbours, more specifically targeting India.. The deterrent value of such steps gets nullified when US President follows up with softer statements and visits of US top dignitaries chirping in Islamabad that Pakistan is essential for US strategic interests in Afghanistan or when the United States engages in Doha for peace negotiations with the terrorist grouping of Afghan Taliban holed up in Pakistan.

Both in the North Korean context and in the Pakistan context, the United States should not be seen as going alone and bypassing Japan and India. A case in point was the US Special Envoy on Afghanistan skipping India altogether as he pirouetted in other capitals in the region.

Geopolitically and strategically, no political space is available to the United States in building up India as the lead Asian pivotal power and nett provider of security in the Indian Ocean and concurrently molly-coddling Pakistan in the Afghanistan context. Inherently the two strategic stances of the United States on the above score are in clashing contradictions.

Ironically, Pakistan is no longer the 'Frontline State' of the United States. It has morphed now into emerging as "China's Frontline State'. Having been effectively colonised by China through the CPEC yoke of \$62 billion Chinese investments to serve China's strategic needs, it will be futile for the United States to expect that Pakistan would be of strategic utility value to the United States.

In overall Indo Pacific Security imperatives, the United States can ill afford to proceed with policy formulations which are oblivious to India's strategic sensitivities over US approaches to Pakistan, notwithstanding Afghanistan.

The United States to get over this strategic dilemma to offset its Pakistan dependency for logistics needs of US Forces in Afghanistan has to face the hard decision of recasting United States policies on Iran. Iran till 1979 was the strongest pillar of US security in this region. There is no reason why the United States cannot recast its Iran-policy and reclaim Iran in its strategic orbit, Saudi Arabia notwithstanding.. India could assist in this direction by its good ties with Iran and Indian partnering Iran in the development of Chah Bahar Port and its road connectivity to the Indian built circular highway in Afghanistan.

Also must be pointed out that the United States can ill afford to place Japan and India in the same equation when it comes to US Trade Wars ongoing with China. US allies and strategic partners cannot be subjected to same trade restrictions as applied to China as an adversarial nation of the United States.

Concluding, it needs to be reiterated that the United States to maintain its global predominance in 2019 and beyond has to face hard policy choices in a major reset of its policies towards Russia and similarly with Iran. Cold War obsessive fixations in US policy establishment need to give way to a realistic reappraisal of US security imperatives for a 'China Checkmating Strategy'. In tandem, US policies towards Pakistan require a more muscular approach due to Pakistan's emboldenment because of the China Factor. Lastly, but not the least, the United States if it wishes to retain its strategic partnerships with Japan and India as crucial for Indo Pacific Security, the United States needs to cultivate Japan and India in the truest sense of the term as 'partners'.

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