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South Asia geopolitical dynamics as it enters the 2020s is destined to be dominated by an increasingly confrontationist China-Pakistan Axis being countered by India as a rising Emerged Power reinforced by India's centrality in the Indo Pacific Security Template revolving around the nearly two decades-old US-India Strategic Partnership acquiring intense proximate contours.

Major Powers and the global community must note that the China-Pakistan Axis—a virtual military alliance of two authoritarian 'Garrison Nations'---one imbued with Islamic Jihad as instrument of State-policy--- and the other the last surviving Communist monolith whose leadership is critically dependent on Communist ideology fanaticism. This combination is a geopolitical and military explosive mix as dangerous for Indo Pacific security reminiscent of Hitlerian Nazi Germany and Italy's Mussolini's Fascist philosophies.

Initially, it needs to be recorded that the China-Pakistan Axis existence, though in evolving stages, commenced soon after the China-India Armed Conflict of 1962. Both China and Pakistan were tempted into with their strategic convergence of containment of India and their history of armed conflicts and territorial disputes with India.

The China-Pakistan Axis had therefore to be viewed as a geopolitically compulsive marriage of convenience fully consummated strategically in second decade of this Century by China in virtual colonial control of Pakistan, courtesy the Pakistan Army--- a Pakistan Army willing to be a bed mate with the Devil itself, if need be, for military containment of India.

The China-Pakistan Axis therefore pre-dated the evolution of the US-India Strategic Partnership by nearly 40 years and its emergence cannot be attributed to being a logical reaction to the evolution of the US-India Strategic Partnership.

In 2019-end, the picture of the China-Pakistan Axis is one in which China has Pakistan shackled into a deep concubinage strategic relationship from where Pakistan even under some more nationalistic leaders will find it difficult to extricate.

The United States after half a century of fawning over Pakistan for Old War compulsions even letting Pakistan off for its promiscuous relationship with China including US permissiveness in letting China build Pakistan's nuclear weapons arsenal and long range missiles delivery means, belatedly realised by the turn of the Millennium that the United States can no longer afford to ignore India's national power attributes and started viewing India as an existential counterweight to a rapidly militarising China and its aggressive brinkmanship potentially challenging United States global and regional predominance.

India too was prompted to move strategically proximate to United States due to disintegration of Former Soviet Union, compulsions of Russia to enter into a strategic nexus with China and United States belated recognition of India's powerful potential of emerging as a Strategic Partner of United States, and that too substantially.

From its initial beginnings in 2000, and despite some US aberrations along the way, the US-India Strategic Partnership today has evolved into a vibrant and promising Strategic Partnership with robust military cooperation prompting calls within Washington Establishment that India should be designated as a "Major Non-NATO Ally" with all its attendant connotations.

Standing on the verge of the 2020s, South Asia now faces the prospect of witnessing a power tussle with China Pakistan Axis ranged against India and by extension the underpinnings of US-India Strategic Partnership. As the coming decade unfolds and so also the following decades, it would require crystal-gazing to arrive at conclusions of the likely future of this South Asia confrontation in-the-making.

Briefly, without resorting to detailed examination of conflict scenarios so emerging in South Asia, the broad visualisations revolve around three contingencies. These are (1) Pakistan –China War, whether Limited War or an All Out War (2) China's Military Intervention to Bolster Pakistan's War Against India(3) United States Military Intervention in South Asia to Contain China's Intervention on Pakistan's Side.

Prevailing conflictual contours and Pakistani provocations/threats to escalate armed conflict against India following India's article 370 related to Kashmir and Kashmir's full political integration in India, has mentally imbalanced the Pakistani Establishment into throwing the nuclear warfare gauntlet against India. Border shelling and armed clashes on the LOC have intensified and Pakistan Army can be expected to push-in Islamic Jihad terrorists into Kashmir Valley in a concerted manner before the mountain passes and infiltration routes are closed by winter snowfalls to create turbulence and disruptions for the Indian Army.

India's logical response against such Pakistan Army provocations keeping in mind the Uri Surgical Strikes and the Balakot Surgical Air Strikes as an indicator will not be muted. India will strike hard and deep at Pakistan Army targets and Pakistan Army affiliated terrorist camps.

India may not restrict itself to a Limited War option and with decisive leadership, with Pakistan's tottering economic situation and lack of international support for Pakistan Army provocations, may be tempted to neutralise the Pakistan Army threat, once and for all and also calling Pakistan PMs nuclear threat bluff also.

Contextually, in the scenario unfolding as above, the China-Pakistan Axis comes actively into play. China with its massive strategic and financial investments in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor can ill-afford Pakistan to lose to India. India militarily wakening Pakistan Army and denting its domestic and global image of self-proclaimed invincibility will be tempted for a military intervention in South Asia to forestall India's military victory over Pakistan.

Unlike past notional military support of Pakistan Army in India-Pakistan Wars of 1965 and 1971, China will be more than obliged to move away from its notional military support of Pakistan and protect its China Pakistan Economic Corridor stretch in its upper reaches running through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir and also to protect its upcoming Chinese Navy Base in Gwadar/ Somiani Bay stretch of Balochistan littoral of North Arabian Sea.

India on its own military strengths has been actively preparing for a Two Front War in which the China-Pakistan Axis becomes operative in the event of an India-Pakistan War of the future.

There are many in the strategic community who argue against the possibility of China's military intervention in South Asia siding with Pakistan in the event of an India-Pakistan full-blown all-out War.

However, strategic and military prudence will dictate that India's war-preparedness is kept at optimum levels, plans and contingencies regularly honed and global community constantly sensitised of the possibility of China-Pakistan Axis coming into full play against India on the side of Pakistan.

India should never ever base its military plans on "intentions-reading" of Chinese political leaders. The Sino-Indian War 1962 was a bitter

military lesson that India can never ignore. Political intentions change overnight.

That brings us to the last scenario of United States military intervention in South Asia in the event of the China-Pakistan Axis being put into full gears by China to swing the military balance away from India's preponderant military might.

In the above scenario one is entering into unpredictable analysis of United States and US President's responses to a conflict situation in South Asia in which China now comes into play as an active military participant against India.

My take on this challenge is that the United States would be impelled to undertake a military intervention in South Asia against China, not merely for India's sake and upholding the spirit of US-India Strategic Partnership but for the wider ramifications of overall security and stability of the Indo Pacific security template in which reside United States vital national security interests, independent of US stakes in India of the 21st Century

Therefore, I would strongly maintain, that the United States would be impelled to go in for a South Asia military intervention against China-Pakistan Axis coming into play, much against any 'risk aversion' and 'hedging strategy' that may be in operation.

The last question which India's military planners must wargame at all levels independent of National Security Council confabulations and position papers is to visualise and script scenarios that may emerge when such US Military Intervention takes place in South Asia against The China –Pakistan Axis.

Concluding, it needs to be stressed that neither India nor the United States should base their military operational and contingency plans on pious readings of China's political leaders. It was the United States permissiveness in the 1990s which facilitated China to build up Pakistan Army's nuclear weapons arsenal with long range missiles delivery means. It was UUS reversing gears in id-2000s from its post 9/11 take on Pakistan Army "Double –Timing" the United States leading to Afghanistan requiring US Forces military embedment for last 18 years. India and the United States must actively and jointly plan for combatting the emergence of the China-Pakistan Axis attempting to reach its intended fruition to jeopardise both United States and India's security

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