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China's Six Decades of Unremitting Offensive Military Adventurism Calls for Indian Foreign Policy Reset

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By Dr Subhash Kapila

China defying global geopolitical dynamics heavily weighted against China and in favour of India has been engaged since May 2020 in unprovoked military escalation and armed clashes in Eastern Ladakh. Chinese triumphal arrogance against India calls for an urgent reset of India's China-policy.

The above confirms that in 2021 China offers no political space for any political or diplomatic dialogues for reconciliation. China would stiffen and escalate its military expansionism in Eastern Ladakh to militarily remove the Indian buffer that geographically separates Aksai Chin from Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.

Consequently, what is also confirmed in 2021 for India's foreign policy establishment is that China has left India no option but to fully align with the United States & the West as their 'Natural Ally'.

The China Threat to India is 'Real & Live' and does not offer India the luxury of "Platonic Strategic Partnerships" -- an obsessive mindset foisted on India's policy establishment by practitioners of the rather dubious 'Strategic Autonomy' which India would require another 50 years to achieve.

Prior to 2014, India's foreign policy formulations on China were plagued by misplaced and misperceived notions clinging to the much flaunted but geopolitically redundant notions of Panch Sheel, Non- Alignment and Strategic Autonomy. Indian Prime Ministers hoped that

China would ultimately see reason in establishing a harmonious relationship with India by defusing border dispute tensions.

Consequent to the above, India's foreign policy on China stood characterised by abject China-appeasement, an overly sensitiveness to China's strategic sensitivities on Indian issues of National Security and India's wider diplomatic options to offset China's disruptive strategies to demean India's growing stature and destabilisation of India's peripheries.

China's relationship with India as manifested in last 60 years makes a sordid and dismal reading of unremitting aggressive military confrontation and military standoffs all along India's borders with China Occupied Tibet, strategic encirclement of India and creation of Pakistan as a Nuclear Weapons State to challenge India's predominance as the Regional Power in South Asia.

China's unprovoked betrayal of India by inflicting the Sino-Indian War of 1962 deeply wounded the Indian people's psyche and even when past Congress Governments attempted China-Appeasement policies they stood 'severely disconnected from Indian public opinion. Indian public opinion psyche against China has hardened more recently with China's nuclear weaponisation of Pakistan---long considered as an implacable enemy of India.

Indian public opinion against China and Pakistan will increasingly be a crucial determinant in formulation of 'China Policy' by Indian Governments. No Indian Government can politically afford to be in a foreign policy disconnect with Indian public opinion on China.

If the above was not enough, China stoked internal security challenges for India and continues to do so in India's North East insurgencies and Maoists unrest in India's sensitive areas.

In the 21st Century, China along with Pakistan is now indulging in Hybrid Warfare strategies against India to which India is now waking up to. Provoking political discontent within India, buying influence amongst Indian Opposition leaders, buying influence within Indian print media and infiltrating Indian Universities to mislead young minds is all a part of China and Pakistan's Hybrid Warfare.

In marked contrast to China's dismal record of military adventurism against India, past Indian Governments in obliviousness of overwhelming Indian public opinion has been marked by supine China-Appeasement, **'China-Threat State of Denial followed by 'De-emphasis or Underplaying the China Threat' even when China's aggressive propensities to destabilise India were in full play.**

India's past attempts to build up harmonious relation with China by increasing exponential volumes of trade hoping that China's antagonism would cease have failed. In the bargain India has landed itself in worrying trade deficit

Decades long torturous attempts of India to be overly 'sensitive to China's strategic sensitivities' on every conceivable Indian foreign policy move led to India's foreign policy be distorted in the vital Indian national security domains and a diplomatic retardation of foreign policy unbecoming India's aspirations towards an ascendant power trajectory

In the third decade of 21st Century with India having progressed to the status of an Emerged Power and where under the Modi Government India is engaged seriously in reducing its military differentials with China and a fast-track development of matching infrastructure is taking place in along India's borders with Tibet, the inescapable challenge that comes to the fore is that **Imperatives exist to Reset India's China-policy Formulations** and revise the underlying premises of the last 60 years.

This Paper is not a research paper on China-India relations richly endowed with historical chronologies but is confined to offering in brief major perceptual observations for India to break-out of its existing foreign policy mould dominated by Non-Alignment era hangovers.

China Figuring as an Emerging Global Threat in Major Powers Threat Perceptions –Indian Foreign Policy Needs to Factor-in

In 2021, China has started figuring in Threat Perceptions of Major Powers, with exception of Russia, as an evolving 'Global Threat' The China Threat is no longer confined to Indo Pacific Security or as India's prime and potent military threat.

China's geopolitical ambitions are no longer confined to Indo Pacific Region or to Asian confines. China's Maritime Strategy 2015 coupled with its 'Belt & Road Strategic Blueprint' encompassing Maritime Silk Road and the Eurasian Heartland Silk Road projects in the guise of economic and trade contours barely hide the military end-aims of these Chinese tentacles.

The above are the core of China's Grand Strategy of challenging United States global predominance and China's obsession to emerge as the 'Second Pole' in a new bipolar World Order.

Major Powers in 2021 have joined the dots of China's explosive military confrontation with India, China's South China Sea military depredations, Taiwan's military coercion and possible military intervention and political and military coercion of Japan as early indicators of China as a Global Threat.

In view of this awakening in Major Power's capitals that China is Evolving as a Global Threat which needs o be contained with 'Balance of Power' strategies ---both political and strategico-military.

India cannot stand aloof as one of the prime targets of Chinese military expansionism. China is fully conscious that what stands in between its Global Ambitions and their realisation is India as an Emergent Power, but in military confrontation with China. I brought this out in an earlier Paper, that India is a “Natural Ally of the United States & The West’ India cannot escape that role.

Indian foreign policy should logically move towards greater integration and joint efforts with Major Powers of the world to ward off the China Threat which is assuming wider dimensions.

China-India Military Confrontation 21st Century-- Military Perspectives should be Determinants of India’s New China-Policy & Strategy

In 2021, the inescapable stark reality is that China and India are in a “State of Military Confrontation” seriously bordering on the edge of a ‘State of War’. No political space exists for optimism on reconciliation of China-India relations or for endless rounds of diplomatic dialogues or Senior Military Commanders Dialogues as current events related to Eastern Ladakh indicate.

In 2021, with China intent on altering the ‘status quo’ existing alignment especially in Eastern Ladakh by massing 60,000 extra Chinese Army troops and with India equally intent under Modi Government to offer stiff resistance to Chinese military aggression by matching Indian Army inductions for defence of Ladakh, the China-India military confrontation has been rendered “Explosive”

China in its prevailing mood in 2021 of triumphant military arrogance fuelled by perceptions of United States power decline inherently carries dangers of serious military miscalculations which could provide an incendiary spark for a Limited War flare-up which could widen to a wider conflagration.

It is no longer a simple ‘Boundary Dispute’ between China and India where diplomatic parleys and compromises could defuse the situation.

What we are witnessing today is penned in the opening lines of my Book: ‘China-India Military Confrontation: 21st Century Perspectives’ (2015) which read “Asia in the 21st Century is destined to witness an intense geopolitical power struggle involving the two strategically Asian giants China and India on ascendant trajectories to add more power to their ‘Emergent Powers’ status and attempting to stake out their spheres of influence on the vast Asian landmass and maritime expanses.”

It further reads “Asia for the first time be witness to the simultaneous rise of two virtually equally matched nations that promises to make the geopolitical jostling between China and India, that much more intense.”

Geopolitical jostling of ascendant Powers invariably manifest themselves in military confrontations wherein what comes into play is not diplomatic niceties of Summit Dialogues like the Wuhan Informal Summit 2018 or its Mahabalipuram follow-up dialogues, Track II Dialogues

or behind-the-scenes parleys by Special Emissaries.

Contextually then, what comes to the fore, is a “Muscular Diplomacy” Strategic Blueprint which incorporates a mix of ‘Balance of Power’ foreign policy strategies with attendant fast-track military build-up to deter the ‘Disruptionist Power’ from wanton military aggression.

Contours of the same are visible in Indian foreign policy of Modi Government but India has to move more forcefully and unapologetically especially in terms of ‘Balance of Power’ foreign policy blueprint.

Many in India would yell at me when I assert that in China’s evolving national mood of triumphal military arrogance visible in 2021, no scope exists for India to hope for political settlement with China through ‘Dialogues’. India is left with only the ‘Military Option of Standing-up to China with Credible Conventional and Nuclear Deterrence.

Indian policy establishment should not forget European history on the eve of the outbreak of the Second World War. China in 2021 is more in a mood reminiscent of Hitler’s Germany in late 1930s

India’s China Policy Blueprint should cater for a ‘Long Haul Military Confrontation with China’& it’s Collateral Fall-Outs

“Strategic Distrust” cannot be wished away in the coming decades as China in the absence of massive political discontent or economic breakdown is least likely to be swayed from its intense military confrontation with India.

China’s military confrontation added with China’s “Colonisation of Pakistan’ and imperatives to keep this spoiler state strategic asset longevity alive is least likely to dilute its military confrontation with India.

China-India military confrontation being now drawn into the vortex of a global ‘China Versus The Rest’ power- play adds another factor which will prolong China-India military confrontation.

All the above factors added together suggest that Indian foreign policy has to be prepared for not only keeping India credibly poised to meet the China Threat but a China Threat that may end up as a ‘Long Haul’ one.

Collateral impact that would challenge Indian leadership would include steering Indian foreign policy away from shibboleths like Strategic Autonomy to one of Balance of Power formulations in full alignment with the United States & the West.

India as a consequence of the above should be prepared for contingencies of military siding and support to its ‘Natural Allies’.

Indian Foreign Policy China Blueprint should Incorporate De-Coupling India from China-led & China-Dominated Organisations

India's Governments have till date pursued misperceived formulations that India's foreign policy ends would be served by joining China-led and China –dominated organisations and mechanisms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) , Asian Infrastructure Development Bank and BRICS comprising Brail, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

No geopolitical, strategic, economic or military quid pro quos have accrued to India by joining the above organisations. With Russia clasping China in a strategic embrace and with both China and Russia using SCO as a fig-leaf for greater military relationships with Pakistan---India stands orphaned in these organisations.

Further, how could Indian policy establishment ever ignore that China was basically creating them as counterweights to US & the West global predominance. There was no Non-Alignment component in these organisations.

Pressing imperatives therefore exist for Indian foreign policy resetting its China Blueprint to “Decouple India from SCO, AIDB & BRICS”.

Concluding Observations

Six decades of China's unremitting offensive military adventurism against India should have prompted past Indian Governments that China was an “Implacable Enemy of India’ India continued to slumber on till 2014 when the first awakenings of this realisation dawned on the Modi Government.

India's well-intentioned though ill-advised by policy establishment of Wuhan Informal Summits and its follow-up at Mahabalipuram left PM Modi apparently convinced that India had no option but to stand-up to China's military adventurism.

The result was China being stopped in its tracks in Eastern Ladakh by Indian Army ably supported by Indian Air Force from its military expansionism instincts to alter he status quo in that region.

The above is just the opening round. India has to militarily prepare itself for the ‘Long Haul’ of China's unremitting military adventurism against India. China could also attempt greater intensification of generating internal security challenges.

Dr Subhash Kapila is a Graduate of the Royal British Army Staff College Camberley and combines a rich experience of Indian Army., Cabinet Secretariat & Diplomatic/Official assignments in USA, UK, Japan, South Korea and Bhutan..

His last book was “China-Indian Military Confrontation: 21st Century Perspectives”

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