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United States China-Policies 2021 under incoming President Joe Biden are under global cynosure more than in earlier decades not because United States has changed but because China since 2013 has displayed predatory aggression inducing China Threat palpability beyond Indo Pacific combines.

China may not be tempted as yet to engage the United States in an all-out major war but Chinese strategic blueprint is to create multiple security flashpoints in Indo Pacific, South Asia and Indian Ocean-----areas of US vital security interests. Yet, the United States cannot ignore the bigger picture that all these add upto hostile manifestations of a long-range Chinese Grand Strategy where China can even risk a major conflagration with the United States ----and hence the China Threat.

President Biden is no stranger to US foreign policies having spent long years on Capitol Hill in various capacities. Having been Chairman of the U Senate Foreign Relations Committee would have given him enough exposure to the foreign policy challenges that China posed to the United States vital interests and which in 2021 are that much more menacing.

President Biden as Vice President of the United States during two terms of President Barrack Obama, who preceded outgoing President Trump, was witness to China Threat emergence impacting United States National Security interests. The fact that United States then muted its alarms on China's predatory moves in South China Sea, Taiwan and Japan in East China Sea does not wash away the strategic reality that the China Threat to United States is reckonable and warranting counter-moves by United States.

During this time he also had a number of occasions to interact with then Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping—now presiding as President over China's switch over from 'Soft Power' diplomacy to 'Hard Power' military expansionism. President Biden should be ideally placed to measure and size up China's current geopolitical moves and propensities for military expansionism.

President Biden also however comes into office carrying some foreign policy baggage of his earlier policy inclinations of advocacy of US China-policy of 'Strategic Ambiguity' and also advocating 'China Engagement' as opposed to 'China Containment'.

President Biden as he sits in White House Oval Office after January 20 2021 faces challenging contradictory decision-making which would require President Biden to subsume his past attitudinal inclinations on US China Policy to the pressing need to lead and prepare the United States to meet the China Threat head-on.

While Major Powers and others alike would eagerly await the issue of President Biden's first US National Security Strategy document under his signature and which may take time, the United States would not be sitting idle to respond to global challenges to its Superpower predominance.

Contextually, the major global challenge staring head-on at the United States in 2021 is a China emboldened by its exponential increase in military power and dominated by Chinese perceptions that US power is a 'Declining Power' feels confident in challenging US Superpower global predominance.

The above reality on the China Threat has to be taken as a "given" by President Biden and his policy advisors going by China's record of unrestrained strategies to impact US National Security interests and global influence as was reflected in outgoing President Trump's National Security Strategy Document.

President Biden's China Policy 2021- Immediate Doctrinal Challenge

President Biden's immediate doctrinal challenge in terms of US China Policy is to shed away the shibboleths of past Democratic Party Presidents of "China Hedging" strategies and US "Risk Aversion" strategies against China.

President Biden, should he opt for the above stated strategies of the past would only be adding more fuel to China's triumphal aggressive

arrogance of being within sight of achieving “Strategic Equivalence” with the United States.

In 2021, with the global security and stability environment plagued by uncertainties of United States standing-up to China’s rampant military expansionism on its peripheries and growing strategic intrusiveness in the Indian Ocean and beyond to Eastern Mediterranean, the United States is left with no strategic space but to “Checkmate China’.

President Biden may therefore much against his inclination to discard President Trump’s China’s policies may still have to persist with ‘Hard Line’ policies on China including persisting with US Trade Sanctions against China.

Chinese Threat Perceptions of the United States since Turn of the Millennium

Chinese military literature abounds since turn of the millennium has reflected United States as China’s ‘Enemy Number One’. Initially after disintegration of the Soviet Union and US military interventions on ‘humanitarian grounds’ China feared United States military power.

China in the first decade having expanded its Comprehensive Military Power thanks to US distractions in Iraq and Afghanistan and perceptions of US as a declining power stands emboldened in 2021 not only to challenge United States geopolitically but also militarily.

Perceptually, to US policy analysts outside the United States, it strikes that successive US Administrations have failed to recognise the implications of the dimensions of the China Threat to United States under pressure from possible US big business pressures.

United States policy establishments are oblivious to the historical reality that China exhibited the propensity to militarily challenge the United States ever since the Korean War, soon after emergence of Communist China. That too when China had a rudimentary Army and United States was the sole Atom Bomb Power.

Now China with Chinese Armed Forces bristling with modernised warfare arsenals, the China Threat to United States security interests in 2021 emerges as that much more potent.

Contextually, viewing China’s demonstrated strategies unfolding in the run-up to 2021 primarily aimed at the United States, it would be prudent for President Biden to continue existing ‘Hard Line’ strategies against China.

Nature of Evolving China Threat 2021 to US National Security Interests Worldwide.

In the 21st Century with two decades having gone by and with China having generated alarming military turbulence in Indo Pacific—region crucial for US continental defence, the United States has yet to awaken to the exact nature of the overall China Threat.

Overall nature of China Threat with global implications stands discussed in Chapter 13 of my Book: 'China-India Military Confrontation-21st Century Perspectives (2015). This Chapter is titled 'China's Giant Leap for Superpower Status: Global Implications'. The major implications of the foregoing are for the United States primarily. Selected excerpts to highlight this aspect are reproduced below.

“China's leap towards Superpower status in a compressed time-frame and China's misperceived gamble to achieve 'strategic equivalence in the Western Pacific in the same compressed time-frame can be said to have pushed China into a reckless gamble testing the limits of United States forbearance'”.

Since 2015, China in terms of its military expansionism has transcended Western Pacific and extends to Horn of Africa and Eastern Mediterranean-----again taking advantage US unending forbearance towards China's conflictual propensities.

More pointedly “China is well aware that what stands in between China and the realisation of Superpower status are the United States and the strategic convergences of India and Japan with the United States on China's not so peaceful rise.” To that end China will constantly strive to drive strategic wedges in US-Japan and US-India relations to dilute United States overall power to checkmate China

United States forbearance has been sorely tested by China since 2013 onwards from South China Sea to Taiwan and military coercion of Japan.

President Biden has to decide whether he elects to lead United States to checkmate China from further nibbling at United States predominance or let China continue with its predatory gambles denting the image of the United States as net provider of global security and stability or follow his earlier inclinations of “Strategic Ambiguity” and “China-Engagement.

President Biden's moves on China will be scrutinised minutely in Asian capitals and President Biden needs to take cognizance of it seriously.

Moving to the dimensions of the China Threat against the United States it can be assessed that China is well aware that United States Superpower global predominance is buoyed by the network of US military alliances and strategic partnerships and the weakening of these linkages by concerted targeting of these could weaken the United States.

Dimensions of the China Threat to United States as Evident in 2021

The dimensions of the China Threat to United States as visible in 2021 stand no longer confined to the Asia Pacific but extend beyond to Greater South West Asia and the Eastern Mediterranean-----wherein lie vital US security interests. This has come to the fore markedly after China unveiled its 'China Maritime Strategy 2015 document which reflected China's global military ambitions.

Manifestations of these in the Indo Pacific Region can be briefly enumerated as (1) Threatening the SLOCs to US vital alliance nations of Japan and South Korea by taking over illegal control and military dominance over the South China Sea (2) Political and military coercion of Japan by undersea movement of Chinese submarines in Sea of Japan and the recent Joint China-Russia Air Force Bombers patrols around Japan (3) Proxy nuclear threats to Japan and South Korea by North Korea recognised as a rogue nuclear state created by China (4) China's intrusive forays in Indian Ocean to disrupt United States global maritime dominance and transference of US Navy Fleets from Pacific Ocean to India Ocean

Beyond the above, China has attempted to wean European Union away from the United States and also dividing the Atlantic Alliance represented by NATO.

United States-Japan-India Face a Common 'China Threat' in 2021:US China Policy should dispense with Traditional Deference to China at Expense of Japan and India

President Biden can no longer adhere to past US policies of deference to China's strategic sensitivities at the expense of Japan and India's national security interests.

In 2021 the United States, Japan and India commonly face a burgeoning China Threat. Japan and India as Asia's two Emerged Powers are the main pillars of United States security edifice. The strongly evolving QUAD Strategic Initiative is a manifestation of the above.

Both Japan and India are perceived by China as 'Major Threat' in Chinese threat perceptions despite their asymmetries with China. Both Japan and India have serious territorial disputes with China.

In case of India the current China-India military clashes in Eastern Ladakh arise from China's displeasure at growing US-India security relationship.

United States during President Biden's tenure could be faced with serious military decisions if China provokes military crises with Japan or India –the latter more likely.

US-China Policy—President Biden can Ill-Afford Strategic Obliviousness to China-Russia Military Alliance as Visible in 2021

United States policies to date have grievously gone wrong by not resetting US policies on Russia. Even in 2021 reminiscent of Cold War mindsets the Washington policy establishment considers Russia as the bigger threat to USA than the China Threat.

The above fixation over the past decade has pushed Russia into China's strategic embrace and while it is yet not a full-fledge military

alliance like the Warsaw Pact what is visible is for all practical purposes a 'Virtual China-Russia Military Alliance.

What could be debatable is whether Russia would go the whole way in supporting China even in Limited War scenarios.

Concluding Observations

Clashing trajectories of an ascendant China fixated on achieving 'Strategic Equivalence' with the United States as the global second Superpower with United States imperatives to retain its unipolar Superpower eminence portends that the China Threat to the United States would emerge as more amplified as present indicators of China's expansionist impulses multiply.

Securing United States vital National Security interests would leave no options for President Biden but to recast US China-policy premised on the strategic reality that the China Threat is live and potent and United States geopolitical and military postures reflect the same.

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

His last Book was on 'China-India Military Confrontation: 21st Century Perspectives which had a marked focus on geopolitical issues emerging from it.

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