

India's Foreign Policy 2012: A Critical Review in Relation to China and Pakistan Military Threats

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Introductory Observations

India's foreign policy successes cannot be measured by the number of foreign dignitaries visiting India annually, from Presidents to Prime Ministers, or hosting international conferences in New Delhi. This would be a delusionary deduction to draw as such beelines were visible also in the hey-day of the equally delusionary days of the Non Alignment era. What was the end result?

China's military aggression in 1962 militarily humiliating India not because the Indian Armed Forces were professionally incompetent but because the Indian policy establishment went grievously wrong in assessing the China threat, keeping the country in the dark about it and being oblivious to India's war-preparedness. Down the line Pakistan too resorted to military aggression twice in 1965 in the Rann of Kutch and Jammu and Kashmir. Foreign policy failures in both cases were obvious.

India's foreign policy today can be analysed as effective and successful only when measured against three critical determinants of whether the Indian foreign policy establishment has accurately assessed India's security environment, accurately assessed and articulated precisely the threats to Indian security, and crafted India's responses in terms of policy formulations to deal with the threats existent. Regrettably, in the year 2012 that just faded into history, the Indian foreign policy establishment failed to measure upto any of the determinants stated

above.

In the last eight years India has lost political influence over its South Asian peripheral neighbours and India seems adrift in not applying course corrections to regain that influence and control despite the much leverage available at India's command today. Presumably in 2012 this may have arisen from external readings of India's uninspiring internal dynamics in terms of political corruption and the governing dispensation not attempting obtaining of bipartisan support for its foreign policy initiatives.

China and Pakistan continue to be India's main military threats to its security and in the year 2012 while their rhetorical barrage of peaceful intentions towards India may have been noticeably vocal, their demonstrated policies and actions should have convinced India's foreign policy planners that no peaceful intentions exist as part of China's and Pakistan's armoury of conduct of relations with India.

The irrefutable reality is that India's military adversaries, China and Pakistan are nuclear weapons states conjugally tied in an unholy strategic nexus pointedly targeting India ever since 1962. Complicating India's threats scenario is the other strategic reality that the United States as the sole superpower and the global countervailing power is traditionally inclined to tilt towards Pakistan and China whenever the chips are down against India

India's foreign policy in 2012 ended in a continuum of past failures where India in no way could neutralise The China Threat and The Pakistan Threat by diplomatic outmanoeuvring in the face of Chinese and Pakistani strategic thrusts. Nor was India's foreign policy successful in harnessing the much-vaunted US-India Strategic Partnership to its advantage to the aforementioned end.

Flowing from this reality is the paramount importance of the Indian Government keeping Indian public opinion suitably informed so that everyone is on the same page. In the existing electronic newscoverage 24/7 by the vibrant Indian electronic media India's foreign policy cannot be conducted or formulations arrived at away from the glare of the media and in defiance of Indian public opinion and therefore the imperatives of the foregoing.

India's foreign policy establishment even at the highest levels bemoans that India's foreign policy cannot be conducted or managed in full glare of media publicity implying that it should be kept in shrouds. India's foreign policy planners need to recall the Nehruvian years of Indian foreign policy management and the impact on India's national security. Keeping India's foreign policy formulations and initiatives in shrouds not only betrays a lack of the establishment's confidence but also that there may be foreign policy skeletons in the Government's cupboard that need to be kept tightly locked up away from public scrutiny.

India's foreign policy in 2012 failed to keep intact the strategic gains of yesteryears in our neighbourhood. Nepal and Maldives have slipped out of India's orbit. Bhutan may also slip away. Bangladesh too seems disappointed by the lack of active Indian diplomacy to sustain the earlier progress made. Iran has been unnecessarily been lost as a strategic partner of India and friend----- once again due to the present

trend of outsourcing Indian foreign policy to Washington

Notwithstanding the above are the failures and a worrisome one too is of Indian foreign policy in 2012 in not recasting Indian foreign policy in relation to the intensification of the military threats to India from China and Pakistan. What more proof does the Indian policy establishment needs than the deluge of data available in the open domain of what Pakistan and China are upto in relation to generating threats to India's security?

India's Pakistan Policy Stands Outsourced to the United States Risking India's National Security

India apparently does not have any independent foreign policy on Pakistan commensurate to and relative the threats that Pakistan poses to India's external security and internal security. India's Pakistan policy stands mortgaged to the United States since 2001 which dictates to the Indian policy establishment the foreign policy contours that India needs to adopt towards Pakistan.

Consequently, in the year 2012 the chickens have come to roost as far as India's Pakistan policy is concerned. India's Prime Minister some years back asserted that India could trust General Musharraf and that India can do business with him. The revelations now surfacing in the public domain about the Musharraf years and Musharraf's own pronouncements lately prove how wrong the Prime Minister and the National Security Adviser were all the way from Havana, Thimpu, Sharam al Sheikh and the Pakistan Army beheading India soldiers on border patrols recently. We nearly gave up Siachin Sector and Baltoro Ridge in a repeat performance of Aksai Chin being gifted to China because both Prime Ministers claiming that not a blade of grass grew there.

Peace with Pakistan and peace dialogues with Pakistan cannot be pursued at the cost of India's national security and 'National Honour'. Nor is the adage relevant that we cannot choose our neighbours. We may not be able to do so but India can make sure that Pakistan as a neighbour does not stamp on our toes.

India's Pakistan policy was more trumped than ever by Pakistan since 2007 or so with Washington's poster boy General Kayani's emergence as Pakistan Army Chief and his subsequent extension of three additional years under US pressure. General Kayani's covert collusion with the United States in furtherance of US strategic interests relative to Afghanistan ensured that the Pakistan Army had a veto power on US policies in South Asia, with particular reference to India.

With impending exit of US Forces from Afghanistan in 2014, India is headed to 'Square One' in the United States-Pakistan-India strategic triangle. Proxy war will intensify in J&K, border clashes will increase on the LOC and US pressures on India on Kashmir will increase. The indicators to this effect are already in evidence.

India needs to redefine its Pakistan policy by moving away from appeasement of Pakistan under US pressures and announce

unambiguously 'Red Lines' which Pakistan cannot cross in relation to India nor the United States can be insensitive to.. Topping the list would be that India would not hold any peace parleys with Pakistan on issues that affect Indian national security-----Kashmir, Siachin, and Sir Creek etc. The only peace dialogues that India should agree to talk with Pakistan are trade and commerce, economic cooperation and people-to people exchanges.

Should thereafter Pakistan Army indulge in any misadventures against India, then India should retaliate appropriately not only by direct military action if necessary alone but also by applying pressure points against Pakistan in Baluchistan, the so-called Northern Areas and Sindh.

The Indian policy establishment needs to shake itself out of the fears of Pakistan's likely escalation of conflicts to nuclear exchanges. Pakistan Army has traditionally a bullying trait and it will neither have the guts to start a nuclear exchange and it would be prompted not to indulge in it by external factors including pre-emptive actions to deprive it of its nuclear arsenal.

The other constant lament at Indian apex levels has been that in terms of its Pakistan policy, India has to do business with whosoever is in power in Pakistan and some diplomats and retired Indian military officers suggesting that India should open Track II dialogues with the Pakistan Army hierarchy. Nothing could be more preposterous as it follows the United States policy thrust of sanctifying Pakistan Army's political role and also perpetuating Pakistan Army's control of Pakistan's India policy. In relation to the former it would imply that India would be ready to conduct foreign relations with Pakistan even should Hafeez Saeed come into power in Pakistan.

Emphasised before many times in my writings, India's Pakistan policy should revolve around three or four main foreign policy thrusts, namely (1) Minimal diplomatic relations to be maintained (2) Take Pakistan off India's foreign policy radar (3) No peace dialogues with Pakistan (4) No back channel diplomacy involving use of Track II and Special Envoys (5) United States and Britain to be firmly indicated that they have no say in India-Pakistan relations and that these will have to be confined to a bilateral context.

In any case simply put what strategic stakes does the United States and Britain have in the peace and stability in South Asia more than Pakistan has facing an existential crisis of alarming proportions today. In my Papers of the last decade I have highlighted that the United States is not an 'Honest Broker' for peace in South Asia and it will reappear truer as 2013 unfolds.

The above parameters should be in play in India's Pakistan policy till the Pakistani people- at- large rise against the present system of Pakistan Army dominating Pakistan's political space and its India policy.

India's China Policy: An Apology of a Foreign Policy of an Emerging Power

India today's figures in global strategic calculations as a possible strategic counterweight to China in relation to Asian security and in the

overall power balance in the Asia Pacific. With such a halo bestowed on India not in recognition of India's present foreign policies but in recognition of India's potential power attributes, India by now should have capitalised on this global sentiment.

India's capitalisation of the above sentiment by skilful and audacious diplomacy could have made possible the minimisation of The China Threat and The Pakistan Threat to India's national security. India has not demanded in its foreign policy postures any trade-offs or quid-pro-quo from the United States and other major powers who claim that they have a strategic stake in Asia Pacific security.

India's China policy lacks strategic audacity where Indian Army Chiefs are made to mouth by the Government that Chinese military incursions into Indian Territory possibly arise from lack of clear demarcation of the Line of Actual Control. The significant omission in Indian policy establishment's such spineless summations is that the Chinese are no fools to agree that their military incursions into Indian territory arise likewise from the lack of a clearly demarcated Line of Actual Control when till today they have refused to agree to such a demarcation. The Chinese policy establishment is clear that India can be pushed and pushed back and all that the Indian Government would do is to adopt more supine and apologetic postures.

Taking at face value the repeated assertions by successive Indian Army Chiefs that the Indian Army is capable of repelling any Chinese military aggression then why is the Indian policy establishment hesitant to stand upto China's aggressive posturing? Are we going to witness a repeat 1962 performance where the Indian policy establishment at the apex levels persist in divining Chinese political and military intentions as divine?

In India's foreign policy on China the dangers of not articulating precisely or de-emphasising The China Threat by the Prime Minister and his National Security Adviser or keeping this reality in a shroud within the corridors of power in South Block and out of public discussion, carries the following dangers:

- Robs India's national security planning structures, organisations and decision-makers of adopting an integrated approach to deal with The China Threat.
- With an archaic Indian civil-military relations template such threat de-emphasis of threats to India's national security amplifies the severe disconnect that exists between India's policy establishment and the Indian military hierarchy charged with defending India's national security.
- In the absence of any National Security Strategy document issued under the signature rightly of the Indian Prime Minister, the Indian Armed Forces hierarchy do not receive clear articulation of India's military threats to enable the Force Planning and Structures of their respective Services.
- De-emphasis of military threats from the China-Pakistan collusive nexus by the Indian Prime Minister and his National Security Adviser leads to massive cuts in the Indian defence budget every year by the Finance Minister seriously affecting India's war preparedness and national security. This year itself a Rs 10,000 crore cut has now been imposed

affecting materialisation of critical military hardware.

- India's foreign policy lacking conspicuously the emphasis on India's military threat from China and Pakistan is misread in foreign capitals that India may be capitulating to China's brinkmanship or that the Indian policy establishment is apathetic towards the menacing threats to Indian security. On both counts India's external image is affected and distortions accrue in major powers assessments on India in their respective strategic calculi.

Concluding Observations

The China Threat and The Pakistan Threat are live threats and existent in different manifestations both in the military field and in the non-military field. These are irreversible strategic realities that no amount of Indian peace-mongering, Track II or Special Envoys can erode. It is a tragedy of the Indian policy establishment to continue to be oblivious to this strategic reality. Only two conclusions can be drawn from this. The first conclusion being the traditional Indian decision-makers weakness to ignore threats until India is actually clobbered by them militarily and the second being that strategic drift and ambiguity would pass off as a calculated strategy to confuse the opponent. In both cases India's foreign policy postures do a disservice to India's national security.

India's foreign policy formulations, foreign policy initiatives and the foreign policy quest quest for strategic partnerships must factor in these threats and determine the course and direction of India's foreign policy. India-at-large is restive and seriously desires strategic audacity from the Indian foreign policy establishment and the foreign policies that they craft in particular relation to China and Pakistan.

In both China and Pakistan, their foreign policy formulations towards India are heavily influenced by the Chinese People's Liberation Army hierarchy and in Pakistan by the Pakistan Army hierarchy and would continue as such even with evolution of alternative political structures. In India too logically and realistically, the Indian Army needs to be involved in policy formulations when China and Pakistan have the propensity to resort to military aggression against India on existing disputes involving territory.

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