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Vietnam presumably is the only nation in the world which had been subjected to decades of war and conflict incessantly ranging from the French, Japanese to China and the United States. It is a tribute to the valour of the people of Vietnam that in all wars inflicted on them they outfought their military adversaries with rudimentary instruments of war and forced the conflicts to end in a stalemate.

The Address to the UN General Assembly by Vietnam Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung not surprisingly this year dwelt on the horrors of war and the imperatives of the United Nations, the UN Security Council and the major powers to prevent wars and conflicts by ensuring that international laws and conventions are adhered to and respected by all. The latter applying more specifically to the major and powerful nations,

The horrors of wars were dramatically and tragically highlighted by the Vietnamese Prime Minister when in his Address to the UN General Assembly he highlighted how when war waged by the United States against Vietnam two decades or so back “Vietnam suffered 15 million tons of bombs, four times the amount used in World War II. Each Vietnamese bore nearly 10 times his or her weight of bombs, not to mention the suffering of 70 million litres of the silent but deadly Agent ORANGE/Dioxin.”

The Vietnamese Prime Minister in his Address pleaded before the world community that the ideal goal should be to make the world free from wars. But he was realistic enough to point out the vexing question and the strategic reality that war is an ever present threat despite dominant trends stressing peace and development.

Having laid the contextual background against war and conflict the Vietnamese Prime Minister moved to the subject of the raging conflicts

over territorial issues in East China Sea and the East Sea of Vietnam (South China Sea). China was diplomatically not directly named by him in his Address but it did not need naming as the entire assemblage at the UN General Assembly is conscious as to how China has indulged in conflict escalation in the South China Sea against its relatively small and less powerful ASEAN neighbours, namely, Vietnam and the Philippines and also against Japan in the East China Sea.

Seldom highlighted in public discourse, though appearing in strategic discourses, the Vietnamese Prime Minister pointedly referred in his Address to the dangers as to how even a small incident in the South China Sea could trigger a war.

On Vietnam's stands on the South China Sea conflicts, the Vietnamese Prime Minister once again reiterated that "Vietnam consistently pursues a policy of peaceful resolution of disputes to defend its legitimate interests and fully respect those of the global community in accordance with international law, the 1982 UNCLOS, the Declaration of the Conduct of the Parties in the South China Sea (DOC) and efforts on Code of Conduct (COC)."

Like at the Shangri-La Dialogue earlier this year at Singapore, the Vietnamese Prime Minister re-stressed at the UN General Assembly currently the imperatives to reduce "strategic distrust" between the major powers so that wars and conflicts can be reduced.

Comments:

Vietnamese political dignitaries at virtually all conceivable forums have consistently been drawing attention to the explosive flashpoint that exist in the South China Sea by China's conflict escalation in the South China Sea against Vietnam and the Philippines

Notably, in his Address to the UN General Assembly the Vietnamese Prime Minister referred to the East China Sea where China is similarly engaged in conflict escalation against Japan, which as brought out in my earlier Papers is no 'strategic pushover'. It Rightly implied by Vietnam's Prime Minister is that it is the entire Western Pacific which is conflict- ridden as a result of Chinese aggressive policies and actions.

The Vietnamese Prime Minister's Address to the UN General Assembly this year is once again a timely and effective reminder to the global community and especially to the United States that more than the Middle East, it is the Western Pacific which needs immediate conflict resolution.

India also needs to firm up its diplomatic moves on the dangerous potential of conflict escalation in Western Pacific by China's military brinkmanship on territorial disputes.

Vietnam and Japan are closely tied in strategic partnerships with India and all three suffering from China's military brinkmanship on territorial disputes, India aspiring for Asian leadership and a global player to be needs more assertive stances.

India in its bilateral confabulations with China cannot shake of the “lateral strategic realities” of Chinese aggressive brinkmanship and these must find reflection, in view of what has been pointed out in the preceding paragraph.

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