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## China is the Major Threat to Asian Security and Stability

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Contemporaneous review of the Asian security landscape would in mid-2014 suggest with clarity that China has emerged as a major threat to Asian security and stability. The China threat palpably raises concerns all over the Indo Pacific.

The China threat to Asian security and stability can only recede if China elects to modulate its aggressive strategies and militarily provocative postures and takes conscious steps to generate “strategic trust” amongst Asian countries as a whole. Then only can it project convincing credentials within Asia that it is a benign stakeholder in Asian security and stability.

Alternatively, the China threat can be diluted if the global major powers and the major Asian powers act in a concerted manner to checkmate China’s unprecedented military rise and military assertiveness all over Asia whether on the land borders or in Asia’s maritime expanses.

United States, Russia and major Asian powers like India need to be strategically honest in highlighting the China threat that has already emerged and created “strategic distrust” all over Asia. Strategic analysts and policy analysts have already started speculating that if the powers named above do not exercise some plain-speaking on China’s aggressive impulses all along its land and maritime borders and now air spaces over international waters, then dangers exist of a Nazi Germany-like danger looming all over Asia with devastating effects.

Nazi Germany too was being appeased and molly-coddled by the existing powers of the day and the same trend is visible today in relation to China.

From South Asia through South East Asia and on to East Asia there is not one major region of the Indo Pacific in which China is not involved

in territorial and sovereignty disputes with its neighbours and where lately China in defiance of international norms not indulged in conflict generation, conflict escalation or aggressive military brinkmanship.

China's propensity to do so arises from its historical record of seeking resolution of its territorial disputes with its neighbours by the use of military force or the threat to use military force. China does so with immunity, secure in the belief that the powers that could provide counter-vailing power to restrain China would hesitate in doing so because of their own selfish political expedencies.

It is therefore galling for strategic analysts that whether at the global level countries like the United States engage China on the specious pleas that China needs to be engaged to bring it in the global mainstream as a responsible stakeholder in global security. This has not generated any matching positive responses from China.

Similarly, it is galling to witness the spectacle at multilateral summits like the BRICS Summit recently where an unwarranted deference is displayed by countries like India towards China completely oblivious to China's demonstrated record of the military situation on the India-Tibet border where Chinese troops were committing incursions even while the BRICS Summit was ongoing.

A brief review of the Asian security landscape is in order in relation to what China has demonstrated in each of the Asian regions in terms of its propensity to use force or threat to use force or use regional proxies to further its strategic ends.

East Asia is the latest theatre of China's military aggressiveness and brinkmanship. China has upped the military ante 'against Japan by provocative actions and political and military coercion against Japan over the ownership of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea. China has gone a step further in its military provocations by declaring an ADIZ over the East China Sea setting a new provocative trend of controlling and dominating the 'air-space' over international maritime expanses.

East Asia also provides the glaring instance of China using its North Korea protégé, equipped with nuclear weapons and IRBMs—courtesy China, to introduce an added destabilising and uncertain strategic element in a highly surcharged and edgy strategic environment.

South East Asia provides the most glaring example of China's conflict-escalation and use of political and military coercion against its small and less powerful neighbours like Vietnam and the Philippines. Here again China has been involved in islands- grabbing in the South China Sea from both the Philippines and Vietnam by use of naked military force. China still has not restrained itself from aggression in the Spratly Islands.

In South East Asia too China has a new-found proxy, namely Cambodia to divide ASEAN regional grouping unity in relation to its South China Sea military adventurism.

In South Asia, more appropriately to be termed as the Indian Subcontinent, China and India are locked in a military confrontation along the

India-Tibet border. The territorial disputes that China has imposed on India as elsewhere in Asia are characterised by China's dogged obstinacy to maintain in what can be construed as any settlement of the vexed border issues can only be done on China's terms.

China's aggression against India is a regular feature whether in Ladakh or in Arunachal Pradesh in the form of intrusions into Indian Territory or violations of Indian airspace. The situation is militarily tense as China approaches to India are from a position of strength emerging from a militarisation of the Tibetan Plateau including deployment of nuclear missiles targeting India without a corresponding Indian military build-up.

To arrest India's rise as an Asian power and keep it confined to the Indian Subcontinent, China for over four decades now has built Pakistan as its regional protégé and the 'regional destabiliser state'.

China's propensity to resort to political and military coercion on the Asian strategic spaces are only likely to grow as China expands its nuclear and missiles arsenal and its force projection capabilities as it makes a bid to muzzle its way into being recognised as a "strategic co-equal" of the United States.

With the strategic canvass of the Asian security landscape that has been unfolded above can any reasonable analysis suggest otherwise that China is not a threat to Asian security and stability?

*(The views expressed are his own)*

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