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China and India are in a state of military confrontation and it is no use for the Indian political leadership and the policy establishment to pretend that it is otherwise. How do you describe relations between China and India when both nations are virtually in a state of eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation on the entire stretch of the India-China Occupied Tibet border on the icy Himalayan heights? How do you describe the China-India security environment when China obsessively perpetuates and refuses to make any efforts to resolve the boundary dispute and on the contrary in recent years is intent on provocative brinkmanship by generating border incidents and confrontations which could due to even a slight miscalculation spark off a limited border war if not a full-blown armed conflict?

Can China-India relations be described as normal and peaceful when during the recent State-visit of the Chinese President to New Delhi the Chinese Army under the Chinese President's control engineered a serious border military stand-off with Indian troops in Eastern Ladakh and which lasted throughout the Chinese President's visit?

Preposterous enough was a media report appearing on October 16 2014 which reported that China had issued a warning to India not to proceed with plans to build a lateral border road connecting both ends of Arunachal Pradesh which is an integral part of the Indian Republic. Is India a tributary state of China whereby China feels empowered to issue 'diktats' to the Indian Republic? Is it not high time that the Indian Republic as a sovereign State, advises China at the highest level to back-off and that such warnings would be treated with the contempt that they deserve? Is it not time for the Indian Republic to stand up to China for whatever is the cost?

If China contends that Arunachal Pradesh is a 'disputed territory'. then by the same token the whole of China Occupied Tibet is a disputed territory as that peaceful and spiritual kingdom was forcibly annexed by China in 1950 and thereafter subjected to a brutal ethnic and

religious genocide. China had no borders with India until Tibet was annexed and appeared as China Occupied Tibet. China's claims to Arunachal Pradesh flow in Chinese logic from its military occupation of Tibet. It is another matter that a global amnesia exists on China's forcible military occupation of Tibet for the last six decades and more. That does not wish away the fact that Tibet today is China Occupied Tibet.

While China went in for a wholesale massive military build-up including deployment of nuclear missiles and upgradation of military infrastructure in China Occupied Tibet post the 1962 War with India despite the fact that China was not faced with any threat of military aggression from India. The Indian Republic in the Nehruvian tradition was oblivious to the evolving major and long term security threat to India. India continued in a state of denial on the China Threat to India and thereby lowered its guard. The situation in 2014- end is that China enjoys overwhelming military superiority in China Occupied Tibet which endows it with political and military coercive capabilities against India and resort to military provocations against India on the Himalayan borders.

China stands encouraged to indulge in such provocations against India because of the strategic timidity of India's leadership over the years which prompted them to adopt weak and appeasement policies towards China. **More significantly, the cardinal sin of the political leadership of the Indian Republic over the years has been to underplay or de-emphasise the persisting 'China Threat' to India. This has carried its own costs in terms of adoption of lackadaisical approaches of the Indian Defence Ministry in preparing the Indian Army or the Indian Air Force or the Indian Navy for a high state of combat readiness to meet the China Threat. Underplaying or de-emphasising the China Threat by the policy establishment has led to a loss of a sense of urgency in India's bureaucracy for combat preparedness against the China Threat. And, this extends to speedy acquisitions of military hardware or development of strategic defence infrastructure in the border regions.**

A strategic reality check is therefore imperative to highlight the ramifications of the China Threat and this therefore needs to be done at the outset. The strategic reality check needs to focus on multiple levels of India's approaches and readiness to face the China Threat which may erupt at any time going by the contemporaneous reading of events in China, China's pronouncements and Chinese attitudinal inclinations towards the Indian Republic.

Needless to state is the fact that in view of the demonstrated strategic timidity of the Indian political leadership, the Chinese readings of the 1962 –Syndrome persisting in the psyche of the Indian policy establishment and Chinese arrogance on their military superiority in relation to India, China has nothing but contempt for India. **It is tragic and rather pitiable to note as a strategic analyst that India's policy makers when devising any foreign policy initiatives to offset the China Threat or any accretions to Indian Army military formations to offset Chinese military superiority or operationalising our ICBMs are weighed down by the dominant thought as to what China would think or how China would react.**

Strategic reality check in relation to China-India relations and the China Threat is therefore necessary of Indian political leaderships' record

over the years and their efforts in terms of monitoring and oversight control of the combat preparedness of the Indian Armed Forces and the creation of military infrastructure that could add to Indian Army's or Indian Air Force to prosecute effective and hard-hitting military responses that the China Threat may pose.

Indian political leadership has never paid serious military attention to matters military, which deficiency arises from a lack of requisite strategic culture and the proclivity to leave matters military to be tended by the civil bureaucracy who were even more strategic culture deficient nor inclined to study national security matters in a visionary manner. For these bureaucrats of the Ministry of Defence dealing with India's military preparedness in relation to the China Threat was one more routine activity of their generalist bureaucratic responses. For the Indian political leadership and their bureaucratic acolytes some strategic realities that need to be highlighted are outlined below which should awaken a sense of urgency in relation to the China Threat:

- The China Threat is India's long-term threat and shall persist into the next few decades. **Strategic Distrust between China and India is as high as the Himalayas and as deep as the deepest portion of the Indian Ocean. This is a brutal strategic reality that India must live with and craft its strategies accordingly.**
- No inducements exist for China to give up its military stranglehold over China Occupied Tibet or comprise its present hold by according autonomy to Tibet. Tibet which lies at the core of China's hegemonistic strategies in Asia stands already described by China as a Core Issue on which China is ready to go to war to keep it as part of China
- India cannot afford to compromise its stakes in Tibet without forfeiting its aspirations to emerge as one of the leading Asian powers and an emerging global payer
- China cannot ever be expected to dismantle its massive military deployments or military infrastructure in China Occupied Tibet as it imparts China with significant capabilities to keep India tied up within South Asian confines and thereby impeding India's rise as an emerging global power.

China is militarily breathing down India's neck on our Northern borders and the decades of neglect especially of the last two decades needs detailed and constant monitoring by India's new and dynamic Prime Minister. It is going to be a Herculean task but India's combat readiness against the China Threat needs a crash and fast track plan in terms of filling up the glaring voids in the military hardware inventories of the Indian Armed Forces. Some additional points which require the Prime Minister's consideration are outlined below:

- India's Prime Minister must have regular and institutionalised weekly meetings directly with each of the three Service Chiefs directly to keep themselves abreast with the military situation and Indian combat preparedness and intervene where slippages detrimental to Indian security are propping up.
- The top-most imperative is for India to restructure its Ministry of Defence by staffing it with military professionals and incorporating the military hierarchy directly in the national security decision-making processes.
- India's Defence Ministers must learn to run the Indian Armed Forces with a small Defence Minister's Office. If the Prime Minister can

run the country with a modest Prime Minister's Office, there is no logic as to why an over-sized and over-bloated Ministry of Defence civil bureaucracy is required when the Defence Minister can run all the three Services of the Indian Armed Forces through the Services Headquarters.

- DRDO and the Department of Defence Production must come directly under the control of the Prime Minister to ensure fast track indigenisation and production of military hardware within the country.
- India's borders which are the first point of military provocations and military escalation by China and even Pakistan dictate the imperative that border management, border control and command of all para-military forces and civil police organisations be entrusted to the Indian Army.
- The financial powers of the three Services Chiefs for defence acquisitions are significantly enhanced to order combat equipment emergently required.

The Indian Army and the Indian Air Force which will have to play a major role in any future conflict will have to revise doctrines and strategies to deal with a superior military threat emanating from China with limited means to start with until such time the political leadership indulges in a fast-track defence build-up and modernisation. While doing so both Services will have to devise contingency plans for a dual threat emanating from a combined China Threat buttressed by Pakistan Army military adventurism in the service of its Chinese masters. The Indian Navy will have to play a major role in the event of a dual China-Pakistan armed conflict against India.

In view of China's superior combat potential massed in Tibet and that India's war preparedness even on a crash basis will take years to materialise, the Indian Army needs to devise strategies and operational doctrines for Asymmetric War against any Chinese military adventurism with special emphasis on a wider use of Special Forces and helicopter-borne military operations.

India's intelligence set-up is poor in terms of intelligence penetration of Chinese Occupied Tibet and intelligence gathering in China. This is a serious limitation and can significantly affect Indian Armed Forces operations. Similarly India's counter-intelligence set-up to offset Chinese intelligence penetration of India needs to be bolstered up. Indian intelligence is over-obsessed with Pakistan's ISI and thereby leaving the field to Chinese intelligence operatives.

Cyber Warfare can be expected to be used as a major weapon by China in the next conflict against India and this requires putting into place integrated strategies and mechanisms in place to counter the Cyber Warfare threat from China.

Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty and if this cardinal principle needs to be honoured then India's dynamic Prime Minister needs to forcefully inject a sense of urgency and momentum in his governing establishment and especially the Ministry of Defence to get out after their policy paralysis of the last two decades. Accountability needs to be fixed in the Ministry of Defence and heads must roll for reducing India's war preparedness to an abject low.

The Prime Minister would be aware that the Indian Armed Forces have distinguished themselves in every war with limited means. In case of

China War in 1962 it was not the Indian Army that failed but the political leadership, the intelligence agencies and the Ministry of Defence that failed them. Let not the Indian Republic repeat the 1962 debacle against China which is once again looking forward to “teach a lesson to India” as reports in Chinese military literature suggest.

(The views and expressions used are his own)

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