

STRATEGIC AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN ASIA FOR THE RISE OF CHINA

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Abstract

China is considered as a regional and global power and its rise in the region of Asia is one of the opportunities for the states of Asia rather than a threat. Despite of that notion China has been facing certain security challenges in the East Asia and South Asia just because of regional security dilemmas and US involvement. Nowhere, within South East Asia, China's more active diplomacy is reflected stronger security tie. As a whole, the South East Asian states have received Chinese activism with eagerness.

In Asia, the security realm, China's role, while rhetorically appealing to regional actors has yet to make significant inroads in a regional security relationship. The plan of US to contain China through India and some East Asian states pose further security and strategic challenges for China. After 9/11 with the pretext of so called "War on Terror" US has reentered in the East Asia and South Asia in order to contain the rise of China.

Introduction

To realize about the peaceful rise, China is using confidence building measures, and taking part in various regional organizations. It is steadily building bridges with other countries in the region and tries to resolve all territorial and security issues peacefully. Over the past few months, China has gained much applaud in the region for its multilateral approach, its ability to understand the requirements of regional actors and its desire to address regions' concerns.

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The rise of China is phenomenon, which has engaged the attention of scholars in many parts of the world. There has been negative as well as positive scenario outlined, often conclusions drawn reflect personal convictions of the scholars concerned. In general, academics of the Realist school tend to see China as a potential hegemony in Asia-a country which seeks to throw the United States out of the region and declares a new Monroe doctrine. Liberal scholars on the other hand see China as a positive force within Asia- a China which through its economic strength and constructive diplomacy contributes to the overall peace and stability of the region¹.

United States has categorically expressed its strong apprehension regarding the Rising of China. In fact, 21st century depicts that the potential for competition between the United States and China may increase as China grows stronger². While, the council on Foreign Relations has expressed that "China poses significant economic, military and political challenges for the United States and for the nations of South East Asia."³

Taken individually, South East Asian nations, are considering about the rise of China as a great opportunity with security challenges rather than as a serious and excessive threat. During the peak of Cold War it was widely believed that Chinese communist party has supported South East Asian communist insurgents, because of that South East Asia viewed China as an abhorrent ideological enemy. But now position has been changed and the shift in the South East Asian perception of China is as significant landmark in China-South East Asian relations. Most importantly China considered South East Asia within its sphere of influence.

Since 9/11 China has reportedly changed its security position and shifted to force its relations with United States and with the claimant States in the South China Sea. Not only this, but China is extending

its reach into South Asia with its shift growing economics and strategic influence in the region. On one hand the only super power US offers nuclear power plants to India, and on the other hand China has offered Pakistan, and Bangladesh nuclear power plants of its own to meet their energy needs in order to maintain balance of power in the region. Indeed China has deepened its strategic influence in the region of South Asia particularly with Bangladesh, Nepal, Srilanka and Pakistan.

Rise as an opportunity or Threat

It is the ground reality that states rise and fall in their international status. Some emerge as the leading powers and even superior of their day, while others drop out the ranks of leading states and even suffer a loss of their statehood. However, China appears to be a great power now.

Since 2003, top-level Chinese officials have been using the term peaceful rise to express an ideal growth plan for Chinese political and military expansion. However the term peaceful rise was first time introduced by Zheng Bijan (former executive vice president of china's central party school) in his speech at the Boao forum in Nov-2003 and was later endorsed by the Chinese top leaders Hujintao and Wen Jiabao as a national development strategy, particularly relating to China's link to the international arena.⁴ Some within China agreed that the use of rise could intimidate other Asian countries and the US, who do not want to see Beijing become a center of concentrated power. Others opposed the term peaceful fearing that it could encourage pro-independence groups in Taiwan.⁵

But time and again Chinese policy makers and scholars claim that China does not seek the competition inducing policies of Weimar Germany. Imperial Japan and the Soviet Union in the cold war do not intent to threat the neighbor generally and world particularly. Though the term peaceful rise may undermine Chinese ability to

prevent Taiwan from moving towards formal, legal separation from the mainland. The term peaceful raise creates looming contradiction from Taiwan point of view. China considers Taiwan as domestic issue rather than foreign and outsiders intrude into area. Strong efforts are taken by China to reunite that is why most Chinese analysts view that Taiwan is an exception.

It is said by many political analysts and thinkers that the 21st century will be the century of Asia, with the rise of China and it will be the main focus of US attention. Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger had called the rise of Asia a shift in the centre of gravity of international affairs from the Atlantic to the Pacific and Indian oceans.⁶

At another place Henry Kissinger succinctly noted in his article in the Newsweek of June 29, 1998 on the eve of President Clinton's visit to China.

*Republicans see China as a threat; democrats view it as a laboratory for the spread of American values. Both view China through the prism of their party's experience over the last 30 years. Unfortunately, too many Republicans have established China for the collapsed Soviet empire: diplomatic confrontation economic ostracism and ideological warfare. Too many democrats act as if the principal goal of American policy should be to replicate our institutions and principles in China, even at the cost of our many other interests at stake in Asia and without regard for the complexities of Chinese history.*⁷

Both statements of Henry Kissinger show deep concern about rise of China which causes the worries for United States.

Presently US may try to depict the rise of China as a threat for the neighbors and world. In fact, US has sorted the policy of

containment as it did during the cold war period against Soviet Union, but, however China is not seemed to be a global threat at this time neither it poses military threat for its neighbors because peaceful rise does not require threaten the neighboring countries. But the fact is that it can bring prosperity to the region as a whole. The treaty of Amity with the ASEAN countries and new security concept represents that China emphasis on the principle of peaceful co-existence and maintaining conducive atmosphere in the region and to the globe as well.

South East Asian Dilemma

For those concerned about a rising China, South East Asia is a particular region of interest. It is a region of diverse states and cultures that involves all the major powers in the Asia-Pacific in a multiplicity of Strategic interests.⁸

The general view is that China will gradually emerge in future as a power in East Asia able to challenge the US for regional dominance.⁹ In 1970's West was worried regarding Japan, which is now displayed towards China. World had a widespread threat of "Japanisation". But Japanization did not emerge in the way that most western powers scared about it would. Although, Japan has grown into the World's second largest economy today. It is realized that China still has long way to go before it compares the current World hegemony, the USA, in economic or military terms.

South East Asian states consider China as an opportunity, rather than threat. Though from 1950's to early 1970's South East Asian states considered China as a big dangerous opponent due to its perceived military expansionist systematic design in Asia. "China may always be seen as posing a threat to South East Asia, in view of her size and past experience in which China considered South East Asia within her sphere of influence."¹⁰

Currently, South East Asia has changed its mind in order to maintain good relations with China. China's participation in different multilateral confidence-building activities at the end of Cold War has prepared South East Asia more optimistic, regarding China's international and regional behavior.

Presently, China is actively involving in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), and the Asia Europe Meeting (ASEM) program, and certainly others. Therefore, South East Asian States have turned to become much optimistic about China. Although, South China sea disputes continue to serve as major cause of irritants in China-South East Asia relations.¹¹

In fact, China has already fought Vietnam over the Paracel and Spratly islands and had military skirmishes with Philippine navy in the water of the Kalayan Island Group and Scarborough Shoal.¹²

But with signing of declaration on the conduct of parties in South China Sea on 4th November 2002, there are high hopes that irritants will eventually be resolved or at least be vanished under the lap to enable China and South East Asia to concentrate more on productive area of cooperation. But China still faces the existing major territorial disputes with a few countries in South East Asia, namely, Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam. Indonesia can not be considered as actual state in disputes. Taiwan Strait is one of the major concerns of the region. Chinese military exercise involving missile tests in Taiwan Strait during the Taiwanese election in 1996, caused alarm of danger in South East Asia. It was believed that China has interpreted as arrogant display of China's military might and tried to show the power of its influence in the region. This incident brought the region into serious concern about the Chinese Military adventurism. Not only this but this issue of 1996 compelled the South East Asia to think time and again about the relations with

China. The occupation of people's liberation Army's over Mischief Reef in July 1994 also one of caused horrible concerns in the region. This act was depicted of China's flowing invasion of disputed South China Sea Chain.

The time is changed; Beijing has used the policy in South East Asia as a responsible and friendly international actor. China has shown active participation in the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and ASEAN Plus dialogue. Keeping in view that China was the fast external signatory to the treaty of Amity and cooperation in 2003, which is the indication towards its acceptance of ASEAN norms. More importantly, its willingness to negotiate multilaterally with rival South East Asian claimants the territorial disputes over the Spray Islands in the South China Sea reassured them that Beijing is serious about its "peaceful rise", at least for the short to medium-term.¹³

South Asia and Security Challenges

In South Asia the next most important intrusive strategic presence after America is that of China. China entered South Asia in 1950 soon after it came into power the Chinese communist regime mounted a military occupation of the "Hermit kingdom of Tibet".

South Asia is really a serious flashpoint because of actual potential for conflict between India and Pakistan over Kashmir to spark a major conventional war and also can escalate into a nuclear conflict. South Asia region is also considered one of the dangerous regions in the world. In spite of that, various major powers have taken keen interest in the region in order to gain their strategic and geopolitical interests. China has a big profile of support for Pakistan. China and Pakistan have a long history of relations and mutual cooperation. China has such no intention in seeing conflict between both nuclear powers India and Pakistan.

It has been blamed by many Indian writers, analysts and scholars that China has single-point agenda in South Asia to keep India strategically de-established and it has constructed Pakistan as a regional “strategic balancer and regional strategic spoiler” state in South Asia.

India has received number of misconceptions regarding Chinese involvement in South Asia. It is considered by India that, in South Asia China has attempted to build up a ring of military equipment client states around India. Second, Srilanka, Bangladesh and Nepal did go in for some Chinese military hardware but have since backed off.¹⁴

Third, China is improving its close ties to Bhutan, Nepal and Burma because of an infringement of India’s security zone. Pragmatically India appears to be concerned with the threat from rising of Chinese. It is the Indian perception that China is the serious and long-term threat for India; on the other hand China takes India as a minor and relatively unappealing threat. China is completely satisfied with the status quo, while India does not. India has suffered during the border war between India and China, therefore India seeks to avoid the antagonizing China. There are various schools of thought about China and India relations. That are presented by the different political groups. It is the view of Bharatiya Janta Party government, to give support to balance of power politics and recognizing the importance of keeping on-going dialogue with China. Another group, which is in minority views with the confrontation that India should improve further its military capabilities. As China has currently no serious threat from India side, therefore it is probably ground reality that China is very interested in developing relations with New Delhi. During the “strategic dialogue” held in 2006, was declared by China and India, the Year of 2006 as a friendship year. They agreed to cooperate rather than compete for global resources. In fact New Delhi is agreed to accept the border status quo on its

border dispute until the resolution is found, but China still wants to keep Aksai Chin, as area of 35,000 square miles in Ladakh Kashmir, which was seized from India in 1962. Though China is agreed to India's bid for the United Nations Security Council seat without endorsement for veto power, but the inherent relations are still fragile.

Currently, The US-India nuclear deal has caused further deterioration in the region. Chinese writers and analysts warn that if Washington makes a nuclear objection for India, other powers can also do the same practice with their allies. If United States makes an exception in case of India then what would prevent China and Russia to make special nuclear arrangements with their close friends. Additionally, how can the US press Iran on nuclear issue if this nuclear deal with India sees the light of the day.

India has also come to realize the strategic importance of South East Asia. During the cold war period Indian leadership viewed that ASEAN is an American surrogate, in contrast, ASEAN named India as the substitute of the Soviet Union. At that time South East Asia was not a confirmed part and parcel of strategic sphere of India security policy.

But after the end of cold war, India moved towards "look east policy" in order to engage actively in south East Asian affairs. Because of Malacca straight, which connects the South China Sea to Indian Ocean with Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Not merely this point attracts India to enter the South East Asia but India is willing to enhance the participation in security affairs in order to compete with rising influence of China.

The 9/11 Event has further incited India to enhance its involvement in South East Asian Region. India may not gain this goal because China is encroached. It's widely believed in most of South East Asia countries over the long period of time with long-term relations.

Far East Dimension

The development of China has created the strategic calculations of US and Japan more complicated. In the context of relationship to US and Japan, a central concern for China is the issue of Taiwan. Definitely, China considers the United States as a major hindrance in reunification with Taiwan.

The issue can be treated back historically when in the early 1950's US signed an official Mutual Defense treaty with Taiwan which strictly curbed the Peoples Republic of China from taking over the island, but during the decade of 1960 to 1970 the normalization came into relations of US and China just because of threat from Soviet Union, but US still continues to sell arms to Taiwan which is one of the unresolved issues threatening China's sovereignty.

There is triangle strategic dimension of China-Japan & U.S. There are divergent interests with over lapping concerns over a variety of issues. U.S & Japan have an alliance with central point of their Asian policies. This began in 1945 with American occupation of Japan, which further strengthened & conformed in 1951, when the security treaty was signed between US & Japan.

The issue of Taiwan has always remained problematic between China and Japan, and no doubt Japan is a loyal follower of America in the international affairs. However, China has concern over US-Japan security treaty of 1997. More importantly, China's concern is over part V of the Guide lines for US-Japan defense cooperation as to whether surrounding areas are meant to include Taiwan itself.¹⁵

The question of inclusion of Taiwan understandably alarms the People's Republic of China, that's why China needs and insisted the clarification of the Defense Cooperation treaty and statements of the Japanese officials.

The territorial dispute over a chain of islands between Taiwan and Okawa called Diaoyu in Chinese and Senkaku in Japanese is a real problem between China and Japan. In the initial stage, United States played vital role in the territorial disputes between China and Japan, but even the current position about this issue still remains ambiguous. China can not ignore the speculations about the possibility of US involvement in the event of military clashes between China and Japan over these controversial islands.

To counterbalance the perceived hostile environment in East Asia, China has to develop solid strategies. However, China has to adopt strategies for South Asia in order to counter US intensions and influence. Following strategies may exercise well:

- China should enhance its cooperation with Russia and other former Soviet States, because Russia will be more trustworthy and reliable partner in Asia. Although Russia is eager to secure China's support.
- China has to develop substantial influence over Pyongyang as China shall have greater effect in terms of political and strategic maneuvering in Korean Peninsula. Thus, China's positive contribution to peace and stability in the region is demonstrated by its role in Six-Party talks on the Korean peninsula, which has produced tangible results.
- China still needs more to strengthen its relations and cooperation with Southeast Asian states. Though china is actively participating in ASEAN.
- China has to focus on increase its influence in Asia in order to lessen the US influence.

US Influence in Asia

No doubt that China's rise will inevitably bring heavy cost for United States. China's rise will leave United States no more uni-polar

power. But it might be the multi-polar World with the rise of China. Since long China and US are ideological antagonists and therefore it will be the efforts of US to contain China from becoming a global or regional power. China has started to counter United States strategic dominance in the region of South East Asia. It has been interested about Chinese regional activism because it is believed that China advances the regions in critical necessities, like post independence struggle for leadership between Indonesia and Malaysia, the major regional security concern of ASEAN has always been the hindrance of occupying hegemony. But it is fact that South East Asian nations share a desire not to fall in the sphere of influence of any one great powerful actor.

Therefore, China has lot of advantages to enter into the region, in which it could be considered as a good in some way for South East Asia. At the same time United States is dominant in the region, South East Asia may not be worried so much for United States' hegemonic intentions but rather its inconstancy. China's most significant contribution has been to provide a strategic concern that can help anchor long-term US attention in South East Asia.¹⁶

In fact, China and United States are not only players to have keen interest for better strategic ties with South East Asia but India, and Japan also who attempt to intensify their close strategic relations.

Probably, South East Asia does not want to choose between China and United States. Thus, the region is more prone and engages to China politically and economically, while it obtains a strategic safety mainly by facilitating US forward military deployment in the region to deter Chinese aggression.

For the past decade the United States has worked to rearrange its major alliances in the Pacific. At the same time, reconstructing Asian alliances began in the mid of 1990's as significant shift is now occurring in which Washington is taking to drive Japan, Australia,

India, South Korea and various ASEAN states as a threat against China's rise. During the period of 1980's and early 1990's China displayed a passive and reactionary pattern of behavior in the foreign affairs but China's way of behavior has become more assertive this time. Since April 2001, spy plane incident with the United States has enhanced the measure of mistrust between the United States and China, certain South East Asian states also have been affected by that.

The aftermath of 9/11 American war on terrorism has unleashed some Strategic losses, shocks and reverses in China's core strategic interests in South East Asia.¹⁷

Chinese leaders themselves have admitted that after 9/11 the geopolitical position has worsened because of terrorism issue.

In response of shifting strategic landscape and security calculus in South Asia has enforced on diplomatic efforts towards its neighbors. Although, 9/11 event heavily did not alter South East Asia perceptions of rise of China, however South East Asia states to view China as serious partners for regional growth and prosperity despite the existence of some irritants in the area of territorial and border disputes.¹⁸

Various confidence-building measures have been in place between China and South East Asia to make their relations strong in the aftermath of 9/11. Major Powers are using the war on terrorism in South East Asia as an excuse for their active military involvement in the region in order to prepare for any military contingencies in the Taiwan Strait, Korean peninsula and South China Sea. Because of this rivalry between major powers, South East Asian states are continuously kept in a strategic dilemma in developing and managing their relations with the major powers. They have been undecided to side single power.

The 9/11 event has brought the United States again to South East Asia. Though before 9/11 United States was to some extent ignoring the strategic importance of the region. Vietnam War made the United States to exhaust to think seriously about the South East Asia region that's why it did not depict only clear strategy to emerge with this strategic important region. Currently, United States paying vigilant attention to threats in the Taiwan Strait and on the Korean peninsula. United States has come back to South East Asia and has declared the region as second front line allies in the war on terror.

In fact, the presence of United States in the South East Asia is creating security anxieties for China, because it is generally viewed by many scholars, think tanks and strategic and security analysis that America has not just an intention to the region to root out the terrorism but also to strategically encircle the China.

US seeks relations and policies not only towards South East Asia but in South Asia in order to resist and contain China. Of course, there are no permanent enemies and friends in international politics. In 1998, when India tested the nuclear bomb a joint statement was given by Sino-US during the visit of Bill Clinton to China that our shared interest in peaceful and stable South Asia and strong global, non-proliferation regime has been put at risks by these tests in May 1998, which made India and Pakistan nuclear powers.¹⁹

After a period of few years United States is seeking the Indian assistance to counter and contain China whereas US is professing to preserve the balance of power. Though it is already admitted by the Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice that US will monitor India and Pakistan for balance of power in South Asia.

Day by day US strengthens its relations towards India in order to hit China. Indian foreign secretary Shyam Saran in a speech on November 28, 2005, dwelt on India-US relations. He referred to "a major realignment of forces taking place in Asia" China increased

capabilities in the region and beyond, India's rise as a major player in Asia. Therefore India and U.S may contribute too much better balance in the Asian region. But various unfavorable moves into relations between US-India create further troublemaking situation for China. In the meeting of nuclear suppliers group (NSG), on October 20, 2005, America put forward a proposal demanding a lift on the ban on sales of nuclear technologies to India, but was turned down. Currently, United States is engaged to have a civilian nuclear deal with India. Of course, this will bring about a series of negative impacts, and China can move to its allies in order to supply nuclear technology. However, china is aware of India's potential to target it with nuclear weapons, and it keeps a watchful eye on the development of India nuclear doctoring.²⁰

Though, it is very considerable that India's emerging nuclear capability can pose a serious threat to China's security.

Conclusion

Since the end of cold war the Chinese rise has been on its peak, but the most of the western policy makers feel that China is emerging as a challenge to the US hegemonic power, and in future Chinese policymakers use the term peaceful rise to the rise of China and they feel that China is content to maintain good relations with the US and its allies. China has been practically working on the policy of peaceful co-existence with its neighbors.

The US feels threatened with the rise of China and regards it a potential challenge to its power, and has been encircling China with its allies so that in future conflict US would be powerful to stop the Chinese power. The Indo-US nuclear deal, US-Japan security alliances, US-South Korea alliance and US-Australia security pacts are based on the Cold War strategy of containment. The presence of US forces in Afghanistan and Iraq has further created suspicion in the minds of the people that actually US is preparing against China.

But China has so far not shown any intention and peaceful rise has continued. China is even supporting the peace process in Korean peninsula. China has been able to convince North Korean leaders to give up their nuclear program. China has developed friendly relations with India and South East Asian nations, and has been successful in amending her relations with Taiwan and Japan.

China's policy of peaceful co-existence has been a huge success and as a result their economy is growing at a much faster pace. And it was its patience that it got back Hong Kong and Macau peacefully.

Although the rise of China has raised the concerns for the United States, but generally it has helped the world because it has created win-win situation and encouraged the Third World countries to maintain low profile foreign policy and achieve the status with peace.

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