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# Chinese Imperialism is Challenged

Dr. Satish Kumar  
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Dr. Tabasum Firdous

China's 'Wolf Warrior Diplomacy' is on prowl. Now it has raised the border confrontation with Russia. Vladivostok which once used to be part of China's Qing dynasty and was known as Haishenwai was annexed by the Russian empire in 1860 after China's defeat by the British and the French in the Second Opium war. Russian city was celebrating its foundation day of 160 years; the Chinese embassy objected strongly on social media and made a claim that it used to be a Chinese territory during the Qing Dynasty. China and Russia share 4,209 km of boundary. They also fought a war in 1969. But later on both resolved the boundary disputes. During the boundary discussion which continued till 2008, the issue Vladivostok never arose. It explains the fact that China is trying to bring forth the image of Qing Dynasty structure through its military and economic power. That is how it opened the many fronts of fights at different corners. The tension between India and China is not deescalating. The Chinese forces are stationed, in fact numbers are increasing. That tells a belligerent mind set of China. But India has geared up to face off the Chinese threats.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that India has given a befitting reply to the Chinese transgression in Ladakh and the world has seen India's commitment in safeguarding its borders. He further mentioned, "India honours the spirit of friendship and is also capable of giving an appropriate response to any adversary, without shying away". The second immediate step was banning some of the Chinese apps. The government has banned 59 Chinese applications including top social media platforms such as TikTok, Helo and WeChat in order to counter the privacy security posed by these applications. This could come as a major blow to China's Digital Silk Route ambitions, eroding millions of dollars from valuation of its companies. This could also lead to more countries following India's path in acting against these Apps. Many countries of the world including China's neighbours are facing espionage threats from Chinese apps.

For many years and decades China has been following the imperialist approach in different parts of the world through Salami slicing strategy. It started with Tibet and moved to all three corners of boundary disputes with India. 2017 was Doklam, tri-junction of India, China

and Bhutan. It has been stealthy inching in Indian subcontinent. Salami slicing means small, stealth military operations against neighbouring countries which accumulate over time in a large territorial gain. China has encroached at least 28 hectares of Nepali land spread across four districts of Humla, Rasuwa, Sankhuwasabha and Sindhupalchok. China has also taken over an entire village that falls in the world famous Gorkha district, but this fact has come to light only now after a local publication carried a story recently. Last year the *Global Times*, mouthpiece of the Communist Party of China claimed Mount Everest is a part of Tibetan China. When Nepal lodged a complaint the Chinese officials apologised for a mistake. This is a part of the Chinese strategy.

There are four parts of Chinese imperialist approach. It does not behave like classical imperial powers of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries which conquered the foreign lands by force and subjugated them for centuries. China silently and stealthy creep into others land; remain there for few days and months. The second step is use of media propaganda by highlighting that this territory belongs to China historically. While stating the history they remain very selective to vouch their legal claims. Third step is to enamour them through economic packages and benefits. Once the government of any country comes under the weight of ineptness, they silently break their institutional pillars and make a vessel state. This is new imperialist venom emitted from dragon's tongue. It spanned in South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and African countries. Some of the European countries are also facing the brunt. Pakistan has completely succumbed to the Chinese pressure. Last year there were widespread agitations near the Gadwar Port against Chinese venture, but agitation was brutally curbed by military forces. The Nepal is moving on the suicidal path in the mouth of Dragon under the communist regime. It has been very unfortunate for India. Justice Katju compared Chinese imperialism with Nazi's and called it more dangerous.

## Tibet

Tibet has been occupied and ruled by China since 1951 in "a calculated and systematic strategy aimed at the destruction of their national and cultural identities." In 1913, the 13th Dalai Lama - Tibet's political and spiritual

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leader - issued a proclamation reaffirming Tibet's independence: "We are a small, religious, and independent nation." The country had its own national flag, currency, stamps, passports and army; signed international treaties, and maintained diplomatic relations with neighbouring countries. Tibet is located to the south-west of China, also bordering India, Nepal, Myanmar (Burma) and Bhutan. Tibet's remain an independent territory; it would be the 10<sup>th</sup> largest country of the world in terms of area. Tibetan delegates participated in 1947 conference as an independent country. Today it is under China's occupation and has been divided up, renamed and incorporated into Chinese provinces. China has sliced it into different parts. When China refers to Tibet, it means only part of historic Tibet: what it names the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) of China. Traditionally Tibet was divided into specific regions such as U, Tsang, Kham and Amdo. However, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) refers to only 50% of the land mass of the Tibetan Plateau.

### **India-China Border**

After taking of Tibet and understanding its strategic location, China calibrated a strategy to usurp the adjoining areas for safety and security of China. Therefore, Aksai Chin area became very demanding. China showcased the historical anecdotes for its sovereignty in the Aksai Chin. If the countries fight with historical records, there will be war against each possible neighbour in the world. But China has a different scheming. The current hotspot of Galwan Valley where Indian forces are facing Chinese PLA has proved the fact China's imperial design has been challenged. What explains the cause of the violent clash and the choice of Patrolling Point 14 on the Line of Actual Control close to where the Galwan River meets the Shyok River. This segment has not witnessed disputes in the past. The newly constructed Darbuk-Shyok-DBO road on the Indian side runs close to the LAC at this point. The Indian post at DBO is at an aerial distance of just about 10km from the Karakoram Pass. After making Ladakh a Union territory, voices have been raised about a relook at Gilgit-Baltistan.

Recently China has shown its aggression against its East Asian neighbours. For many years Chinese neighbours are tortured by China's imperialist designing. It is not only the South China Sea, Taiwan, Japan and even South Korea have had to face Chinese military recklessness. China has moved to Africa with its policy 'Go Out'. Chinese immigrants moved into cities and rural towns. They started construction companies;

opened copper, coal, and gem mines; and built hotels and restaurants.

The anger against China among the people of Africa are immense. Chinese sheep into political circles of the respective countries through economic veins and gradually damage the political institutions through corrupt practices. Chinese owners of copper mines in Zambia regularly violate the rights of their employees by not providing adequate protective gear and insuring safe working conditions, according to a Human Rights Watch report. So Chinese imperial design contaminate the blood turn them rudderless.

### **Chinese Imperialism Challenged**

It is well-said that none of the imperial power survives forever. The Paul Appleby book 'The Rise and Decline of Super Power' aptly postulated this theory. But the unfortunate part of the China is that it has been challenged before becoming the super power. It all happened due to its ill-mannered approach. While narrating the Sanskrit Slokas, the PM Modi said it; the ego of wealth dooms the person and country as well. The same principle applies to China. The world is geared up to challenge the Chinese imperialist design which has become a threat for the humanity. The U.S. is reviewing its global deployment of forces to ensure it is postured appropriately to counter the People's Liberation Army, given the increasing threat posed by China to Asian countries like India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said. "We're going to make sure we're postured appropriately to counter the PLA." China is aware of the fact that India-America joint venture can dismantle the hegemonic power of China. India has never been in favour of seeking help from the US to encircle China. India has unilaterally supported in each of its venture and moment of crisis. But the friendship and cooperation were construed by China as Indian compulsion. China committed mistakes in understanding the ability of the political will of the current political regime in India. Global anti-China sentiment has reached its highest since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and China's assertive "wolf warrior" diplomacy. Now the much water has flown, it needs concrete action. India is ready to face the Dragon in every respect and it is capable of doing it.

### **India-China River Disputes**

The violent clashes between Indian armies and China were very unfortunate which did not happen for almost 50 years. The Army said there were casualties on both

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sides. Beijing was silent on PLA losses. The last military skirmish between India and China took place at Nathu La in September 1967. The current standoff in Galwan Valley has different perspectives between India and China. The Chinese major objections are based on the road constructions by India. This is area of Aksai Chin which is originally part of Jammu and Kashmir. Chinese threats perceptions have emerged from Indian initiatives of changing the political structures of Ladakh and Kashmir. The Chinese core interest lies with its connections with Pakistan, CIPEC which moves along the same route hardly few miles away from Galwan Valley. China might have heard that India is determined to take back the Pak-Occupied Kashmir. The China has been watching Indian political development very closely, how it has changed track from Pakistan to China so far as the core threat perceptions are concerned. In fact, it was said during the Vajpayee regime but China found it was merely political overtones. But Modi's regime has shaken the Great Wall of China. If Pak-Occupied Kashmir is challenged, it will have cascading effects on Chinese calibrations of Asian hegemonic status. The Tibet which is understood as teeth which safeguards the tongue would be under scanner of external threats. The trouble in Tibet will lead to collapse of Chinese Apple cart.

#### **China's Control of Rivers Flowing from Tibet**

The larger question is water resources which China has monopolised being upper riparian country. Most of the rivers flow from Tibetan Plateau, which is called the Third Pole, the largest reservoir of accessible fresh water in the world. Chinese forceful occupation of Tibet in 1951 changed the cartography of Himalayan geo-politics and geo-economy. The advantageous positioning of India was overtaken by Chinese Communist regime. The British left with India's strong footing on the region. Now it has put China much stronger in the region. Indian acceptance of Tibet as an integral part of China demolished the buffer status of Tibet. With this change, water issues evolved between the two countries. Water feuds are especially intense in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. India has signed the different treaties with its neighbours on sharing of river waters: Gandhak (India-Nepal), Ganges (Bangladesh-India), Indus (India-Pakistan), and Mahakali (India-Nepal). China has out rightly denied any engagement with rivers sharing with neighbours. Almost 57 rivers originate from the glaciers and move around South East Asia, Central Asia and India. Roughly 35 percent of humanity of the world depends on the rivers water which flow from the Tibetan glaciers. Asia's water resources is largely transnational.

The vast majority of the 57 transnational river basins in continental Asia have no water-sharing arrangement or any other cooperative mechanism. Yet China also stands out for not having a single water-sharing arrangement or cooperation treaty with any co-riparian state. Its refusal to accede to the Mekong Agreement of 1995, for example, has stunted the development of a genuine basin community. By building mega-dams and reservoirs in its borderlands, China is working to unilaterally reengineer the flows of major rivers that are the lifeblood for the lower riparian states.

#### **Reasons of Conflict between India and China**

In the last few decades China has pushed India into edge of sharing the rivers water. There is long driven plan of China to divert the water from South China to North of its region. As the world knows it after capturing Tibet, some parts of Tibet were spilled and added into Chinese territories. In 2002 one of the PLA officer, named Li Ling wrote a book, 'How Tibets's water will save China'. This caught the attention of then President Jiang Zemin. He had come out with a vision document, 'XIBU DA KAFIA'. The meaning of the document was South-North Diversion of Water. The founder of modern China, Chairman Mao also aspired to do that. But then China did not have the technical expertise. Later China turned to be a dam crazy country. It has more dams than accumulating total dams in the world. In 1949, it had merely 22 dams, current status is more than 50 thousand dams across the different rivers. One of the leading strategic thinkers of India, Brahma Chellaney argued that the building of dams on headwaters of the Brahmaputra, Sutlej and the Indus implies environmental devastation of India's northern and eastern plains. Intensification of other large-scale infrastructural projects, including roads, railways, airports and dams on the Tibetan plateau, also meant increased thrust on India along the borders. The flow of Brahmaputra has been constantly controlled by China. Prof Chellaney said that what concerns India is the annual flow of an estimated 354 BCM of water from Tibet into India, of which 131 BCM is accounted for by the Brahmaputra. The fear has been that China is seeking a water diversion plan by damming the Tsangpo(Brahmaputra) at the Great Bend at Shuomatan Point. The fear of drying up of the Brahmaputra has become widespread in Indian public psyche, especially in Assam.

The concern has aggravated with the news of Chinese plans to build a 1,000-km-long tunnel to divert water from the Brahmaputra River in Tibet to the parched Xinjiang region. India managed to sign a Memorandum

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of Understanding with China on data sharing over trans-boundary Rivers in 2002, and an expert level committee was set up in 2006 for monitoring hydrological activities. In 2014, a new provision for sharing data twice a day from 15<sup>th</sup> May to 15<sup>th</sup> October was added. The Brahmaputra is identified as the flow downstream of the meeting of three tributaries, namely Luhit, Dibang and Dihang, near Sadiya. The link of Brahmaputra with Yarlung Tsangpo, which originates from the Angsi glacier near Mt. Kailash, was discovered rather recently. Out of the total length of the Brahmaputra of 2,880 km, 1,625 km is in Tibet flowing as Yarlung Tsangpo, 918 km is in India known as Siang, Dihang and Brahmaputra and the rest 337 km in Bangladesh has the name Jamuna till it merges into Padma near Goalando.

This data shows that the Brahmaputra gets fatter and mightier as it flows further downstream. This is more so because of the flow contribution of the various tributaries like Dibang, Luhit, Subansiri, Manas, Sankosh, Teesta to name a few. This can be noted from the fact that at Guwahati (Pandu), the percentage annual yield of the main river course from Pasighat is barely 34 per cent, while the tributaries like Dibang, Luhit, Subansiri, as also the tributaries joining between Pasighat and Guwahati contribute the remaining 66 per cent. It defines that China is doing everything to slow the flow from Brahmaputra. If Chinese schemes continue, there is apprehension that a day will come that India's northeast face the brunt of it. Large part of Assam will go dry.

What pains China?

India has commenced construction of fourteen hydropower projects in Arunachal Pradesh as an effort to establish its 'lower riparian right to counter China's first use priority rights'. China's persistent claim over Arunachal Pradesh seems linked to its water agenda, especially in terms of seeking to leverage its position over boundary negotiation. Hydro-related infrastructure

in Tibet would enhance China's military capability, which would finally enhance China's manoeuvrability of negotiating on the boundary issue. It tends to become a threat multiplier in fragile. There is also nexus between China and Pakistan on rivers. China has built a dam on the Indus opposite the Indian border point of Demchok. It is near to Aksai Chin. The area is strategically located on the Tibet-Xinjiang Highway and is critical for the Chinese military to manage deployments on the border with Ladakh, Aksai Chin, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Nepal.

The major concerns of China are India's rising power in the controversial LAC areas. India has built connecting road to spike its military movement. The close alliance with America has led the rise of apprehension in China. Once India develops the ability to embark on China's CIPEC areas, China feels threatened. Its sketching of becoming unparalleled super power by 2035 would be seriously under cloud. China does not want to share the power with India in Asia. India is a vital stake holder of this power sharing. The strategic configuration begins with rivers water sharing. Both want to magnify the hydro power in coming years. China has already installed almost 250GW of energy through Hydro Power. It aims to increase 450GW by 2030. Therefore, the current clashes have major components of rivers dispute between the two countries. Chinese behaviour will be more aggressive in terms of rivers sharing with India.

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**(Dr. Satish Kumar is an Associate Professor in MMH College, Ghaziabad and Tabasum Firdous is Associate Professor in Kashmir University)**