

The article published in The Financial Express June 26, 2020, is given below:

## India-China Border Tension and US redeployment in Asia: 'China has bitten more than it can chew'

By

**Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia**

Chinese have also been flying their fighter aircraft over Senkaku Islands and South Korean airspace. Their belligerence has extended to Australia with the Australians reporting major Cyber attacks.



India is engaging in military and diplomatic level talks with China to resolve the stand-off at Ladakh. While both countries have tried to downplay the standoff and de-escalate the ongoing tension at the Himalayan border, the US has decided to recalibrate its defence commitments to counter emerging threats from China in

Southeast Region. On Thursday, citing Chinese People's Liberation Army's (PLA) recent clashes with India, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo mentioned three US aircraft carrier strike groups which include other ships being deployed in the Indo-Pacific zone in a show of force for the first time in about three years.

There are different views on this move by the US. While some experts welcome this move, there are others who feel under the present circumstances, issuing inflammatory statements will adversely impact the outcome. "This will only augment the existing mistrust and suspicion among the negotiating parties," opined an expert.

Sharing his views, **Lt Gen Vinod Bhatia (retd), (Former DGMO) & Director Centre For Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS)**, says, "China is practising its tried and tested military coercion to impose its will on most of the 27 neighbours. And its forces are not only demonstrating an unprecedented aggressiveness along the India- China LAC, but also in the South China Sea, Taiwan, Korea, East Sea to an extent and the Koreans. India will need to discern China's intent and the larger strategic signals emanating from Beijing, in the geopolitical domain. China's aggressiveness is definitely not on account of the Darbuk – Shyok – DBO road."

"China would not have waited all these years for the road to be completed and the threat to interdict it, he would have done so earlier. It has invested heavily in BRI and the CPEC, which is central to its dream of One Belt One Road. Any perceived threat to the CPEC is not likely to be acceptable to China," opines the former DGMO.

According to Lt Gen Bhatia (retd), "The Redeployment of the American / NATO forces has to be seen in this larger context. They have to factor the emerging threats and challenges from a belligerent China, whose actions are indicative of its positions in a post COVID19 world order, wherein it challenges the rule-based global order, seeking a bipolar world. The US is preparing for future threats that are likely to emanate for China. The redeployment of forces by the US will force a rethink in Chinese strategy, for once China may have made a move too far and too early." "India's resolve and resilience to ensure territorial integrity along the LAC may have surprised China, forcing him to carry out an unusual build-up at the cost of other theatres. China has bitten more than it can chew," he concludes.