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Asian security in 2016 stands dominated by the geopolitical dynamics that are at play in the complex 'Strategic Quadrilateral' comprising the United States, China, Japan and India.

Of the above named countries, the United States is undoubtedly the sole Superpower with complex global predominance in all domains. This predominance has virtually remained intact when the global unipolar moment emerged in 1991 with the disintegration of the former Soviet Union. Many today would like to contest that the United States power and predominance is on the decline. This position is not debatable as none of the major powers enumerated above neither are within closing distance to US predominance nor do they have global power-projection capabilities to carve out their respective spheres of influence at the expense of the United States.

China exhibits the pretensions of emerging as the rival Superpower to the United States, a burning Chinese national aspiration. China no doubt has made exponential progress economically and militarily to reduce the strategic asymmetries in power in relation to the United States. But this is far from done and that makes China a dissatisfied 'revisionist power' out to challenge United States predominance. Regrettably for China, repeated by me for over a decade now, is that China has no 'Natural Allies' with national aspirations synchronous with China in dethroning the United States. Nor even Russia would fully subscribe to the Chinese aim and in any case Russia is not considered included in the Asian Strategic Quadrilateral as in Asian power dynamics Russia has yet to assert itself independently of China.

Japan has in the 20th Century dominated the Asian geopolitical dynamics for the first half of the Century. Japan was the first Asian country to be considered as a Major Power by the colonial powers of the day. Japan today can still be considered as a major power with a significant bearing on Asian geopolitical dynamics and since 1945 fully aligned with the United States in a military alliance to ensure security and

stability in the Asia Pacific.

In terms of Asian geopolitical dynamics, Japan significantly is a contending Asian power against China. China has spared no space and efforts to politically and militarily coerce Japan at every stage.

In the Asian Strategic Quadrilateral, India is the new entrant after decades of wasteful self-inflicted isolation from Asian geopolitical dynamics. With national attributes of power closely comparable somewhat to that of China, the global major powers have conceded to India the status of an 'Emerging Power' by virtue of its ascendant economic and military power trajectories.

India not only in the context of the Asian Strategic Quadrilateral but also in the context of the global strategic calculus can be said to enjoy the unique distinction of the reigning 'Swing State' especially in relation to offset China. The United States and Japan are strategically investing in India for it to emerge as an 'Existential Strategic Counterweight' against a militarily threatening China.

India more specifically under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has opted to cast and put its weight behind the United States and Japan to balance China's not so benign military rise. All available indicators point to the fact that in the Asian Strategic Quadrilateral, India would continue with the course adopted in strengthening its strategic partnerships with the United States and Japan.

The above conviction stands reinforced by the sheer irreversibility of China's military confrontation against India along the China Occupied Tibet border and further complicated by China's strategic nexus with Pakistan similarly and implacably hostile to India.

The pertinent issue that comes to the fore in the above context is that whether the China-Pakistan Axis can imbalance the USA-Japan-India Trinity. Obviously not, simply because Pakistan despite its nuclear weapons arsenal does not have the strength to be a game-changer. Pakistan at best can continue to be a military irritant to India but not enough to distract India from its pivotal role in the US-Japan-India Trinity.

One was not dismissive in not considering Russia as an important player in Asian geopolitics. Russia was being discounted primarily because in 2016 Russia does not enjoy any strategic proximity with United States or Japan or India in their implicit agenda of countering or managing the China threat.

Asian geopolitical dynamics could change should US-Russia relations 'normalise' under the incoming Trump Administration. Russia had in the recent past had indulged in a strategic reach-out to Japan but recessed under Chinese pressure. Russia is once again attempting to recover lost ground with India after an ill-advised pivot to Pakistan.

But despite the above moves, Russia would have to prove a lot to regain credibility with USA, Japan and India that it has moved out of the shadow of being a Chinese satellite. Till the above materialises, the US-Japan-India Trinity has to weld itself more strongly to ensure that this trio is in position of maintaining their position of strength in the Asian Geopolitical Quadrilateral.

The above analysis however presupposes that the United States under the incoming Trump Administration like all incoming US Administrations in their first term does not flip for China, notwithstanding the strong electoral rhetoric against China that President-elect Trump resorted to. Piously, one can fervently hope that the Washington security establishment does not let this deviation take place. Significantly should the incoming US Administration flip for China, it is welcome to do so at its own cost. As reflected in one of my recent SAAG Papers, Japan and India in such an eventuality have other options.

In conclusion, it needs to be stressed that no game-changers can be expected from China in terms of China emerging as a responsible stakeholder in Asian security and stability in its present strategic arrogance trance. China simply cannot stomach Japan and India as rival contenders for Asian strategic space as Asian powers perceived widely as responsible stakeholders in contrast to China and whose ascendancy to power is perceived as benign.

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