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United States strategic embedment in Asian security can only be successfully effective when US policy in 2018 reflects that India and Japan are the pillars of Asian security and therefore a US “Strategic Imperative” and not a policy choice. Implicit in the foregoing is that the United States must extend strategic equitability in its relationships with India and Japan.

Strategic equitability is stressed here in the sense that the United States cannot behave like a ‘Strategic Overlord’ in pressing home US national security interests and expect that Japan and India should meekly subsume their respective national security interest to those of the United States. Mutual respectability is an inescapable imperative for robust ‘Strategic Partnerships’. The United States needs to recognise that in the fast changing geopolitical landscape of Asian security in 2018 any ‘America First’ policy thrusts and formulations necessarily must take into account and be accommodative of the strategic sensitivities of Japan and India, if the United States desires that Japan and India should be active strategic partners of the United States in maintaining Indo Pacific security.

Japan’s locational setting in highly militarised, nuclear weapons predominant neighbourhood intensely adversarial to Japan, coupled with its geographical limitations may force it into an unquestioned acceptance of United States strategic choices and policy formulations. It is this factor that presumably has contributed to the longevity and steadfastness of Japan as an US Ally under the Mutual Security Treaty of 1950.

India on the other hand as a contending power with China in Asian affairs cannot be taken for granted by the United States as India’s subcontinental size and its national attributes of power in human and natural resources coupled with its military strengths and nuclear weapons endow on it a ‘Strategic Halo’ which neither the United States nor Russia or China can ignore.

India with the above mentioned national attributes of power and military strengths in 2018 shorn of its Non-Alignment shibboleths is therefore an independent strategic entity and a powerful player in the Asian strategic calculus and in Indo Pacific security architecture, in its own right.

In 2018 it has reached this eminence not on the shoulders of the United States or Russia. United States policy establishment needs to recognise that if at the turn of the Millennium, India opted for a US-India Strategic Partnership after decades of US-India estrangement, India did so as a 'Policy Preference' and not as a 'Strategic Necessity'. The prevailing reality in 2018 is that it is not only the United States which needs India as a strategic partner but also Russia. China recognising the above reality in 2018 is now more sombre and less condescending strategically towards India.

The United States may have over decades taken Japan for granted in its security policies but the United States can ill-afford to extend the same pattern when it comes to India.

The United States policy establishment should dispel all myths that the US has other strategic choices or options other than India and Japan as pillars of Asian security and its vision of Indo Pacific security. If the US had other options, it would have long ago exercised those options.

Where does all of the above lead to as far as the United States is concerned in its policy formulations, policy impulses and attitudinal reflections on Asian security?

This leads to a simple reality that when the United States enunciates its political military and economic stances on issue affecting Indo Pacific as a whole, the United States must do so after discussions with India and Japan. This is stressed because any policy obliviousness to interests of India and Japan would then break out in the public domain. This undermines the credibility and cohesiveness of United States strategic relationships with India and Japan.

There is another complicating feature that persists in this regard and that is the meddlesome stances quite often of US Congress on foreign policy issues

At times US Congress stances are at cross-purposes with US Administration policy formulations rightly conceived in the overall interests of US interests. It is therefore incumbent on every US President to educate the US Congress on sensitive issues which could generate frictions with India and Japan to the detriment of US interests. It does not devolve on India and Japan to lobby in the US Congress on the issue.

The United States must recognise that applying the same pressure on India and Japan on trade and markets issues as it adopts towards China is counter-productive. China is an adversarial nation of the United States. India and Japan are 'Strategic Partners' of the United States having opted to contribute in the diminishing of the China Threat to Indo Pacific security. India and Japan, therefore, deserve if not demand respect from US policy establishment so that the edifice of United States vision of Indo Pacific Security rests on shoulders of willing Strategic Partners and not on the 'grudging shoulders' of India and Japan.

The United States has shown scant respect for India's strategic sensitivities on its Strategic Partnerships with Iran or Russia. Just because

the US Congress or the US President feels necessary that US sanctions on Iran and Russia need to be applied for US policy purposes, it necessarily does not follow that India more specifically and Japan otherwise have to follow suit and that they would be penalised if they do not adhere so.

The United States seems oblivious to India and Japan's dependence on Iran for their energy security needs. India has still to rely on Russia for advanced weapons systems to build up her capabilities to counter the China Threat. Why should India go every time with a begging bowl to Washington for waivers? It is demeaning for an Emerged Power to do so. Or, why should the US Defense Secretary Mattis have to plead for exemptions for India's deals with Russia on the S-4 missile shield hardware or for spares for Indian existing military inventories? It should be an automatic process stipulated in restrictive US laws.

Those of us in the Indian strategic community, who have been advocating over the years for a robust US-India Strategico Partnership, would be greatly distressed if India is forced into a corner by US policy unpredictabilities in 2018 or by not so subtle pressures on trade issues to carry out mid-course corrections in their policy priorities towards the United States.

In Conclusion, one gets tempted to recall one's earlier writings and this reality also finds mention on the back-page of my Book 'China-India Military Confrontation: 21 st Century Perspectives (2015) that in the evolving geopolitical realities and the imperatives of United States continued 'Strategic Embedment' in Asia offer no choices but for the United States to rely on India of the 21st Century.

The US needs to emphatically recognise that India and Japan are the pillars of not only Asian security but importantly for United States vision of Indo Pacific security, and therefore the United States should respect this reality.

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