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India's Pivotal Indo-Pacific Power Build up needs US & Russian Inputs

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Contemporary and unfolding geopolitical imperatives dictate that both the United States and Russia need to stand committed to the power-buildup of India as the pivotal Indo Pacific Power. India's power attributes of a proven responsible stakeholder in Indo Pacific security management could serve security interests of both the United States and Russia.

It is my firm belief that both the United States and Russia at some stage in time compelled by the churning dynamics of Indo Pacific Asia will be forced to reset their policies by both ridding themselves of the old Cold War mindsets and strategic distrust of 'the other'. A new Cold War has been in the offing since 2001 which is not of Russia's making but that of its presently close partner China. Could Russia afford a secondary involvement in a second Cold War?

The evolving geopolitical landscape in the vast Indo Pacific landmass and maritime spaces arising from China's geopolitical moves laced with threatening contours are generating counter-moves in open manifestations like the United States of contributing towards India's Major Power buildup and Russia's implicit moves in the same direction by sales of advanced military systems like the state of the art S400 Air Defence Systems and lease of nuclear powered submarines and an undertaking to assist India in the launch of its manned Space Missions.

These geopolitical strategic moves by the United States and Russia are recognition of India's emergence as an existential counterweight to China though neither the United States, nor Russia nor even India would like to own it up as directed towards containment of China.

Geopolitically, India stands much above China in that it has had no historical conflictual record with either the United States or Russia and therefore well placed to receive strategic trust from the United States and Russia without impinging on their national interests. Nor is India

unlike China in its power aspirations seeking strategic equivalence with the United States or Russia.

Unlike China which in different decades opportunistically used its propensity to adopt its “Swing Strategy” oscillated between strategic nexuses with Russia and the United States and played these mighty global Powers one against the other, India has not demonstrated such oscillatory propensities.

Both the United States and Russia engage India in ‘Privileged Special Strategic Partnerships’ on date and optically and otherwise India engages both these global Powers in a compartmentalised manner in a way that there is no conflict of strategic interests or playing one Power against the other.

With such credentials India stands uniquely qualified to expect ‘power buildup’ inputs from both the United States and Russia. India has at least till now not indicated any diffidence that India was averse to receiving Russian power-buildup additives.

Similarly, the United States having moved inexorably towards strategic proximity with India should feel that India was in any way devaluing its privileged strategic relationship with the United States by going in for purchases of advanced Russian military systems. India at this stage of her power ascendancy needs fast-track power additives from all quarters as it prepares after a decade of military neglect by the previous Government in New Delhi to meet the Dual Military Threat of the China-Pakistan Axis.

India therefore in 2018 needs to be viewed by the United States and Russia on a transitory trajectory of an “Ascendant Indo Pacific Power” in the making which dictates imperatives of power buildup assistance from all genuine Major Powers. Of the five Permanent Members of the UN Security Council, with the exception of China all other Major Powers have no reservations in India’s ascendant trajectory.

India is today a ‘Natural Ally’ of the United States, West and Japan and would have emerged as such if the United States at the height of the Cold War not geopolitically isolated India because of its non-alignment shibboleths and patronised Pakistan to spite India. Resultantly, India had no choice then but to turn towards the Former USSR for its military hardware in the immediate period preceding the Indo Pak War 1965.

Prior to 1965, Indian military inventories were predominantly British and French. USSR for its own geopolitical reasons when its relations with China were adverse emerged as a ready supplier of Russian military hardware and at the turn of the Millennium India’s dependence on Russia was nearly seventy percent.

Russia too cannot forget that in the wake of the USSR disintegration in the decade of the 1990s through statements by its then Foreign Minister had started terming Russia as the ‘Natural Ally of the West.

In 2018, the perspectives of Russia and the United States may stand changed of each other but the perspectives of India on the United States and Russia in 2018, as I would read it, are complementary to India's buildup of India as a Major Power.

Visibly in 2018 is the reality that India has geopolitically and in terms of privileged military relationships arising from geopolitical convergences moved far down the road in evolving integrations with the United States, Japan and Australia in terms of Indo Pacific Security templates for security and stability.

The United States has strongly underwritten its commitments in terms of India's build-up as the Pivotal Indo Pacific Power. The manifestations of the same are in the open domain with the more recently concluded military agreements signed at the US-India 2+2 Summit Meet in New Delhi.

Russia too after some South Asian policy aberrations of pivoting towards Pakistan seems visibly retracing its steps if nothing else but for sales of advanced military equipment like the S400 Air Defence Missiles Systems. Implicit in this decision is that by such sales of S400 systems it is contributing to the 'degradation' of China's and Pakistan's deterrence capabilities against India.

The final point that needs to be made in this connection is that India's trajectory of Power ascendancy cannot be arrested. It is inevitable given India's naturally endowed power attributes. India's trajectory could be slowed down if power buildup additives are slow in materialisation from external sources. It is for this contingency that India's present dynamic PM Modi has launched on priority a "Make in India" indigenous defence production drive.

Concluding, it needs to be stressed that with India not having displayed the propensity to adopt "Swing Strategy" of China in its strategic relationships with the United States or Russia, therefore it becomes more incumbent that both the United States and Russia engage themselves in India's power buildup as the Pivotal Indo Pacific Power. India unlike China is and would continue to be a 'Benign Power' as a responsible stakeholder in Indo Pacific security and stability. The United States has moved in that direction unambiguously and Russia needs to be more geopolitically convergent with India.

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