

Asia caught between China and US

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AS Europe dithers and the US nervously watches its unemployment rate, a China-led Asian rise is accepted as the new reality. Less noted is the anomaly of an Asia increasingly integrated with the Chinese economy and militarily more reliant on the US.

At a retreat in Hayman Island, Queensland, for Australian CEOs, a security expert noted that this is the first time in Australia's history that its major economic partner is not concurrently major strategic partner initially the UK followed by the US.

China has become for Australia, as it has for many nations in Asia Pacific and indeed around the world, especially those engaged in commodity exports, its key engine of growth. Yet Australia has been one of the US's closest strategic and military allies, from World War II to Korea to Vietnam and Iraq. The planned stationing of 2500 US troops in Darwin, reflecting the Obama administration's tilt to the Pacific, is meant to consolidate these ties. The US and China are not belligerents, yet rivalry is growing. Being between the two is uncomfortable to say the least.

There are many hotspots, perhaps hottest of all the South China Sea, which Beijing has declared to be part of its "core interests" with Washington insisting on freedom of navigation. Besides competing claims to resources, there are disputes over nomenclature. The Vietnamese, for example, whose relations with China are among the tensest in the region, resent the name used by the West and perception of giving in to a Sino-centric perspective. The Vietnamese call it the Eastern Sea. In a recent confrontation between Chinese and Philippine vessels in the Scarborough Shoal area, Beijing claims it as part of its territorial waters in the South China Sea. Manila prefers the West Philippines Sea.

Many in the Asia Pacific region regard the concept of China's peaceful rise with skepticism. The Philippines has been a longstanding ally of the US, and even Vietnam, erstwhile enemy, increasingly looks to Washington for protection. Since the end of the Vietnam War in 1975, America's military presence in Southeast Asia has been, on balance, benign and welcome. At the same time, the region's economies have become increasingly

dependent on China.

At \$362.3 billion in 2011 China has recently overtaken Japan as ASEAN's third biggest trading partner, after the EU (\$567.2 billion) and the US (\$446.6 billion). However trade between China and ASEAN is growing faster: a 24 per cent recorded increase in 2011.

Reflecting this growing relationship, in January 2010 China and ASEAN concluded a free trade agreement CAFTA. In population terms, it's the world's biggest market and, in GDP, third biggest.

The actual physical US military presence in terms of troops in the region is concentrated in Korea and Japan, with small numbers in Southeast Asia the Philippines, 142; Singapore, 163; and

in Asia. Thus Korea depends arguably more than any other Asian nation on the US for security. The number of US troops stationed in South Korea 28,500 ranks third in parts of the world without conflict after Germany, 53,766, and Japan, 39,222.

In the first half of the 20th century, Japan emerged as Asia's greatest economic and military power. From 1932 with the establishment of the puppet state of Manchukuo until Japan's defeat in September 1945, Tokyo sought to establish its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. After Japan's surrender, the American occupation initially sought to chastise and weaken the country both militarily and economically. Following the Communist

for Japanese outward investment is deep. Exports to China mainly capital and intermediate goods as China emerged as hub of Japan's global supply chain is a rare dynamic force in an otherwise anemic economy. Japan has also multiple issues with China, including over territory, notably confrontation over the Diaoyu/Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea, and in economic matters, a recent example being China's ban on export of rare earths to Japan required for its high-tech manufacturing industry.

In Southeast Asia, Japan or the Korean peninsula, one notes the same dichotomy between economic reliance on China and military tension with it.

Without resolving this contradiction, none of the Northeast Asian countries, China, Korea or Japan, can play a leading role. Hence most of the onus for institution building has fallen on ASEAN, the organization of 10 Southeast Asian nations. There has been a proliferation of initiatives, such as ASEAN + 1, ASEAN + 3, ASEAN + 6, the ASEAN Regional Forum ARF, the Chiangmai initiative, the East Asian Community and more. This reflects what's referred to as ASEAN centrality. Much of the deliberations in the formation of these initiatives involve

who to include and who to exclude, while seeking to involve China but not offend the United States. This is the case with efforts to establish the Trans Pacific Partnership, pushed by Washington. Tokyo, Seoul and other Asian capitals hesitate in light of China's apparent exclusion hence, the conundrum as countries find themselves between a rock and a hard place.

The situation in Asia Pacific is perilous and unsustainable. Under these conditions, it's highly unlikely that robust regional institutions will emerge in the near future. And the fact that much of China's economic prowess depends to a considerable extent on the big American market and investment opportunities put additional wrinkles on triangular US-Asia and China relations. With weak global governance and leadership, the Asia Pacific Region for all its economic success keeps floundering on uncertain seas.

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Thailand, 142. However US influence is being strengthened especially through the American naval Pacific Command. Main ties are with Australia, the Philippines and Singapore with upgraded military with Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei.

Moving north to the Korean Peninsula, Pyongyang has just failed in its initial attempt at launching a long-range missile. Consequences of this loss of face remain an unsettling mystery. Also mysterious is the exact relationship between Beijing and Pyongyang and the degree of PRC influence. For Seoul, this is not a matter of sheer academic interest. Korea's share of trade with China, at 27 per cent, is greater than that with Japan and the US combined, 8 and 11 per cent, respectively. There has not been a peace treaty to conclude the Korean War, only an armistice, and in view of the Orwellian nature of the North Korean regime and its apparent nuclear ambitions, the Korean peninsula stands out prominently as one of the most likely theaters of military conflict

victory in China in 1949 and the Korean War, the US rapidly sought to help Tokyo rebuild the economy and turned the country into a passive but loyal, acquiescent ally. Japan did not fight in either the Korean or Vietnamese wars in good part because of its "peace constitution" imposed in early years of US occupation but provided vital logistic and material support.

Throughout the decades Tokyo has acceded to US demands. Japan became the world's second biggest economic power and by far Asia's largest. But given the war memories, Tokyo followed what it referred to as a low-profile policy in Asia in the second half of the 20th century. Most striking in this century, especially since China overtook Japan as the world's second economic power, is how invisible Japan had become. In forums and conferences on Asian issues, Japan is often absent, mentioned only in passing.

Japan's economic dependence on China, with China having surpassed the US since 2008 in becoming Japan's biggest trading partner at over 20 per cent and fastest growing destination

The victims of Halderpur village

LT. COL. (RETD.) QUAZI SAJJAD ALI ZAHIR, BIR PROTIK

HALDERPUR is a small village in Hobiganj. It is located under No. 7 Borojuri union of Baniachong police station. In 1971, it was the site of an aggressive Pakistani air attack that claimed the lives of many innocent lives. This is their story.

On April 13, 1971, Halderpur was in the midst of preparations for a wedding ceremony. The bride Anowara Begum was 21 years old. She was born and brought up in London. While in London, her marriage was arranged to 26 year old Dewan Shahid Mia from Khusharhagaira, a village seven miles south of Halderpur. Dewan Shahid Mia was a teacher in the local Maktab (Islamic religious school). A celebratory atmosphere shrouded Halderpur that day. After a sumptuous lunch of Biriani and Rezala followed by sweets, the bride's family arranged for a stick-fight which is a very popular sport in the area. The field was full of people who were enjoying the exciting game.

A few minutes after the game started, a fighter air craft of Pakistan air force flew low over the field. The air craft circled the field twice and then flew away. The villagers although curious, thought it was only a military exercise and did not reflect further on it.

On April 19, at 2 p.m., two Pakistani air crafts (Saber Jets) were seen flying low in the eastern sky at a high speed. People came out of their homes to see what the commotion was about. The air crafts turned around and once over the village, began firing rockets and shooting with machineguns. In a matter of seconds, rockets blasted through the village and fire broke out. The entire village was almost razed to the ground. Dead bodies were littered everywhere. Panicked and confused villagers carried the wounded to the Thana Health Complex for emergency medical assistance.



The killing spot.

On April 19, 1971, eleven innocent villagers were killed and thirtytwo were wounded. The dead have been identified as follows:

1. Angura Khatun, 15 year old (a student of Maktab, daughter of Abdul Make)
2. Mokbulunnesa, 40 year old (housewife, wife of Fazar Uddin)
3. Amena Khatun, 10 year old (a student of primary school, daughter of Fazar Uddin)
4. Angura Begum, 10 year old (a student of primary school, daughter of Ayub Uddin who was a retired police constable in East Pakistan)
5. Shonar Ma, 40 year old (housewife, wife of Ayub Uddin)
6. Shajal Mia, 14 year old (farmer, daughter of Sifat Ullah)
7. Porchan Bibi, 16 year old (a student, daughter of Tamij Uddin)
8. Kamalar Ma, 65 years old (housewife who came from Naganj to attend the marriage ceremony)
9. Taiyab Jaan Bibi, 65 years old (housewife)
10. Lal Bibi, 41 years old (housewife, wife of Late Alam Ullah)
11. Bashanti Rani Shukra Vaidya, 42 years old.

Manohar Mia of the village lost five members of his family. He was severely wounded and still carries the scars of the wounds he received that fateful day.

The villagers of Halderpur could not understand why on April 19, 1971, their village was attacked by the Pakistan military. Some felt that because of the stick-fight the air craft pilots thought that it was a training field of freedom fighters. The villagers did reflect on the fact that the Pakistan military must have later realized that they had conducted the massacre without reason. But there was never any acknowledgement or apology for the massacre that day.

A few months later, at a dinner in the air force mess in Dhaka, an air force pilot of Pakistan air force told his fellow officers that after he carried out an aerial campaign in Halderpur, he realized it was an unnecessary attack on innocent villagers. When asked by one of his colleagues, Captain Nadir Ali, whether he knew of the damage done to the people of Halderpur, he responded, "Only Bengalis were killed, so what why do we have to care."

Till today no monument for the martyrs has been built in the village in that place of occurrence and no effort has been taken to preserve the graves.

The writer is a Freedom Fighter.

Living under the shadows of ICBMs

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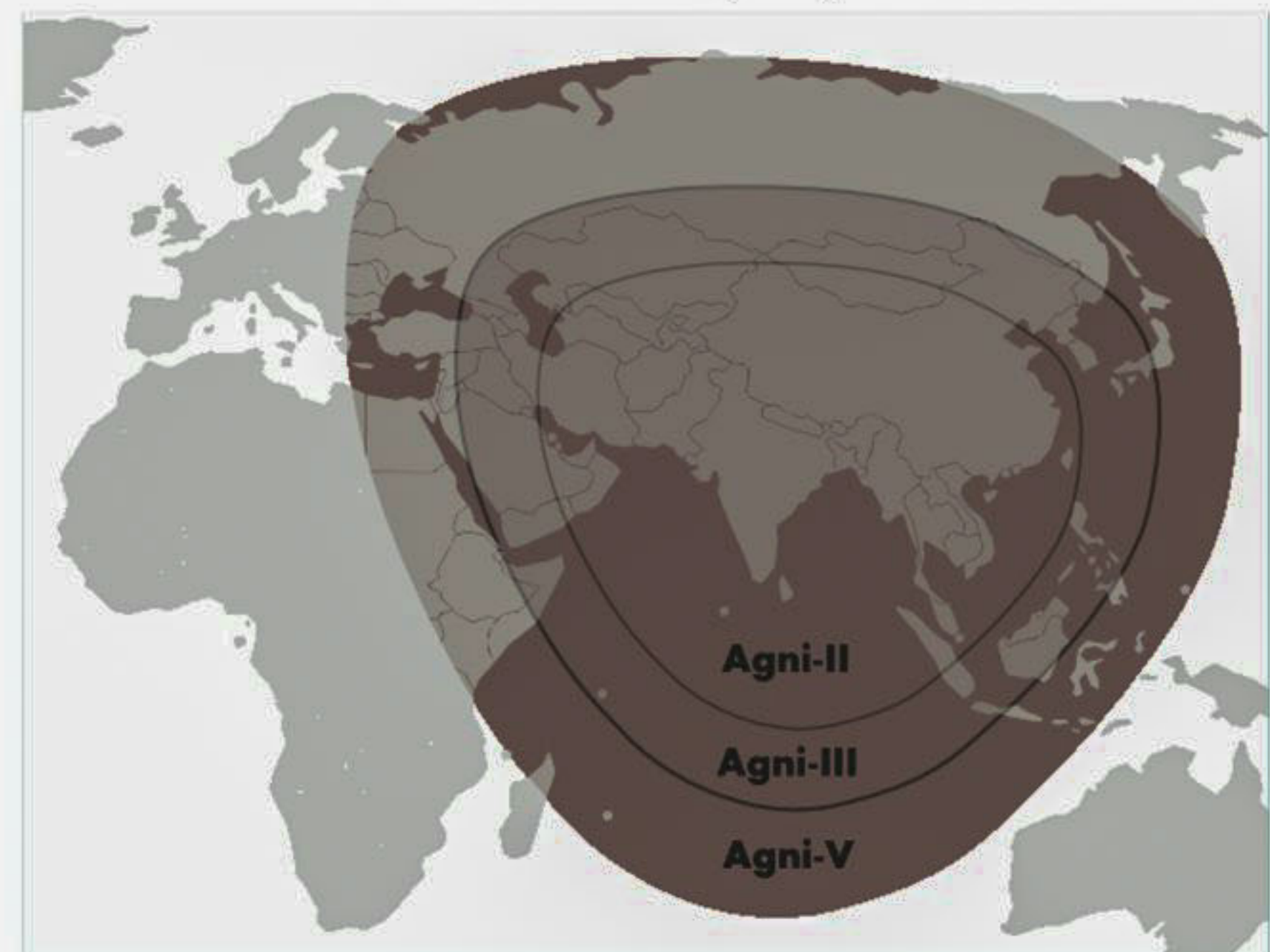
RECENTLY, I watched a movie titled The Day After (1983). The film depicts a fictional war between Nato forces and the no more existent Warsaw Pact Alliance, that rapidly escalates into a full-scale war between the United States and the then Soviet Union. I saw how an ICBM was being launched with nuclear warhead and then detonated in the air or on the surface of the target area. This movie makes me assume what India has actually achieved on their historic day of testing the latest edition of ICBM, Agni-5. With this remarkable achievement India can feel proud as a member of the elite club of ICBM owners. Should we put your hands together for India? What an irony, a country has been spending over five hundred million dollars for developing ICBM for the last three decades where as almost half a billion countrymen there starve. Last year India spent \$46 billion on weapons purchase while only \$11.5 billion and \$6 billion on education and health respectively.

Now let us see this development against the backdrop of the present Asia-Pacific strategic landscape. 'Asia-Pacific- the next pivot' has become a buzz line since the US revisited its global security strategy. Both India and China are bolstering their ever increasing defence spending and so are the other East-Asian countries. To pin down China 'concern' and to gain an upper

hand in the Asia-Pacific region have been the motivation for India to build such ICBM facility which will ensure its steadfast deterrence capability and credibility as a regional power.

Is the Agni-V the last piece? Keep in mind Martin Amis's saying "Weapons

India's primary concern is Asia-Pacific. Agni-V helps her to address her Asia-Pacific concern. A large part of Eastern Europe, many major cities of China like Beijing, Shanghai and in the South East Asia- Indonesia's Jakarta are within the range of Agni-5. This achievement has



are like money; no one knows the meaning of enough." China is still way ahead of India as per as India's defence capability is concerned. For instance, China's ICBM ranges 13000 km which is capable of targeting almost every part of the world. This tactical weapon is very much relevant to its global aspiration.

ensured India's credibility as a 'regional power.'

What are the implications for India's neighboring countries? Will Agni-V endanger further the national security of those neighbouring nations? Do India's aspirations to be a regional power help its neighbours? What sur-

prised me that there was no action or reaction from Bangladesh government regarding Agni-V test. It seems to me that Bangladesh is oblivious of the curse of arms race. Bangladesh is yet to play its due part in regional politics. But the geographical position can no way keep Bangladesh indifferent to these developments. It is now a reality that both India and China are in arms race. Bangladesh is almost sandwiched between these two giants. Any unexpected development between them will obviously endanger Bangladesh's national security. So in no way can Bangladesh desist from taking immediate measures.

There are two options for Bangladesh. One, Bangladesh can build an anti ballistic missile shield to ensure its national security which is out of question. Second one, which is more realistic, Bangladesh can establish a regional forum by involving other countries, like Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and so forth, who are living under the same insecurities. This forum will speak out against arms race in South Asia. Time has come to raise the issue both regionally and internationally. Bangladesh alone may not be able to create a strong impression but can make it possible through a multilateral forum. If this forum can be built then it could work as a good bargaining chip to defuse probable tension between two giants.

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