Triangular Approach to Indo-Pacific Diplomacy

What is the issue?

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- The current friction between US and Australia is was over whether US would honour the Obama administration’s promise to take 1,250 refugees left in limbo by Australian border control policies.
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- The Australia is also concerned about America’s abandonment of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.
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- These issues are reminders that many nations in the Indo-Pacific are struggling to navigate a path between assertive Chinese power and the new uncertainties of Trump’s America.
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What is the new triangular partnership in Indo-Pacific?

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- India Japan and Australia has been moving closer than evr.
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- India and Japan have been constructing new partnerships of security, economic and political cooperation to ensure that their countries can together shape the regional order and check US-China competition, collision or collusion.
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- There is a convergence of India’s Act East vision and Japan’s Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy.
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- Australia has long been another leader in building more robust regional security architecture. They opened ties with China as a part of diversification of Australia’s regional relationships.
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- India and Australia has been establishing economic, people-to-people links

and security ties which include an anti-submarine warfare exercise in the Bay of Bengal last year.
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- The Japan-Australia relationship is also bouncing back. They issued a joint statement noting the synergies in their Indo-Pacific strategies and identifying India as a key third partner.
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What is its potential?

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- The annual trilateral among the foreign secretaries of India, Japan and Australia is being conducted in recent years.
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- They should move beyond dialogue and build practical cooperation that helps all three, and the wider region, prepare for uncertain times.
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- They are geographically best positioned to demonstrate the value of the new triangular approach to **Indo-Pacific diplomacy.**
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- They could build multiple informal arrangements of nations cooperating with one another on strategic issues, working in self-selecting groups that do not include China or the United States.
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- They could mutually self-help in areas like **security dialogues, intelligence exchanges, sharing of maritime surveillance data**, capacity-building of military or civilian maritime forces in smaller countries in Southeast Asia or the Indian Ocean, technology sharing, agenda-setting in regional forums like the East Asia Summit and coordinated diplomatic initiatives to influence both US and Chinese strategic calculations.
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What is the way ahead?

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- This is not about constructing an Asia without America. Nor to contain China.
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- This is about finding ways to limit regional instability amidst the shifting dynamic between America and China.
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- To be sure, the new coalitions like India, Japan and Australia will still lack sufficient weight to balance China on their own.
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- But it would send a strong message to both China and America.
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Source: The Indian Express

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