USA – China Diplomacy

Why in news?

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- Changing dynamic between the traditional hegemon, USA and its challenger, China is becoming apparent.
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- While it is clear that Washington and Beijing need each other, the terms of a new economic and political settlement is far from clear.
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What constituted Trump’s Asia Tour?

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Objectives:

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- Greater reciprocity in the commercial engagement with Asia
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- Strengthening US alliances and partnerships in the region
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- Solving North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme
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Schedule:

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- Trump is participating in two major regional summits
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- Forum for Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation in Vietnam

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- East Asia Summit in the Philippines.
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- He also had bilateral visits to Japan & South Korea.
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- This was then followed by a bilateral visit to China, which was considered the most important aspect of the trip.
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Tone:

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- Most Asian leaders were seen trying please the American President during the recent visit by heaping elaborate praise.
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- The China bilateral was particularly noticeable for its mutual flattery between Mr.Xi & Mr.Trump.
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- However, while flattery certainly generates the right mood music, it is not enough to resolve structural problems.
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What are the challenges?

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- The difficulties in advancing the objectives on all the three fronts are immense.
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- Trump’s exchanges with Xi are also emblematic of the new complexities driving Asian politics.
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- USA has also been pressing for “fair” rather than “free trade” with Asia – which highlights the USAs trade friction with china.
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- Notably, USA’s has a large trade deficit with China.
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- Accommodating China’s rise without abandoning its long-standing allies and friends in the region is another major challenge.
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How has Beijing responded?

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- **Economic -** Beijing wrapping a package of commercial deals with American companies amounting to $250 billion.
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- But many of these deals will take a long time to materialise as they are MoUs rather than commercial contracts.
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- While this will give Mr.Trump some room to drop his hostile rhetoric against China, it does nothing to address USA’s massive trade deficit.
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- Demands for more market access, technology transfer, cyber security and protecting intellectual property is expected to continue.
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- **Political -** While the need for greater cooperation was stressed, there was no significant breakthrough on North Korea.
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- Trump publicly reminded the need to stop arming, financing and trading with North Korea — most of which is from China.
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- Mr.Xi insisted that there were enough avenues for China & USA to co-operate and grow mutually.
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- The need to jointly promote peace and stability in Asia was also stressed.
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- Notably, Trump had previously warned of selling advanced arms to its regional allies – an assertion of its primacy in Asia.
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What lies ahead for India?

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- The tension between USA’s traditional commitment to economic globalisation and Trump’s ‘America First’ policies is unlikely to be resolved any time soon.
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- The rise of China and the turbulence in US domestic politics have created a climate of uncertainty.
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- US and China will continue to jockey for political primacy in Asia.
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- This situation has led the countries in the region to jockey for diversifying their security partnerships.
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- In this context, managing its problems with China while simultaneously deepening ties with US and other key Asian partners is crucial for India.
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Source: Indian Express

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