

## **INDO-US RELATIONS: IMPACT ON CHINA**

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### **Abstract**

*Indo-US relations have changed dramatically at the turn of the century and has presented a challenge for the rising China due to the fact that both the states view China as the major competitor/challenger to their interests in the region. The Indo-US cooperation has been strengthened since the 2005 which resulted in the signing of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal of 2006, and Washington considered India as a major part of its Asia Pivot strategy. Not only that but they have considered China a threat to them due to its ever increasing influence and strategic cooperation with the states of the region in the shape of the Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) to connect the economies of the states with China, which presented an alternate to the Washington and New Delhi. The Indo-US partnership has met with significant challenges by the Chinese rise which led towards the forging of close alliances with the states of the Asia Pacific region in order to contain the China.*

**Keywords:** *Rising China, Competitor, INDO-US Nuclear Deal, Asia Pivot Strategy, Belt & Road Initiative (BRI) & Asia Pacific Region.*

### **Introduction**

Sino-India relations have not remained smooth except for the brief period of early 1950s when they were strengthened due to Indian policy of non-alignment and Chinese policy to develop friendly relations with its neighbors. But the relations soon began to deteriorate due to the border disagreement between both the nations as it was demarcated in 1914 during the British rule known as McMahon Line which separates the India, China and Tibet in the north east of India. The British authorities and Tibetan delegates signed the agreement instead of the Chinese and thus China never recognized the agreement. India being a hereditary state adopted the agreement and did not settle the issue with the China even though it has established cordial relations after the independence.

During 1960's, the threats at regional level from India and Soviet-inspired Kabul prompted Pakistan to seek a security relationship, but US response was always influenced by her relations with India on priority basis. (Khalid Dr. Iram, 2013) The boundary dispute became a bone of contention between both the India and China during the late 1950s and led to the Sino-Indian border war in 1962 in which India was badly defeated by the Chinese forces. In order to create the parity between both the states India has been assisted by the US and the West during the 1962 war and has been greatly supported by the Kennedy administration. But with the assassination of the John F. Kennedy the new president has completely ignored the India due to its policies towards Pakistan and its focus on the Vietnam War. Meanwhile the Soviet cooperation with India continued since the independence, and it became the strategic partner of the India in the early 1970s and became the major source of defence equipments since then.

The worsening of relations between India and China has benefitted Pakistan which has developed cordial ties with the communist state in the late 1950s and has been able to sign the boundary agreement with the China in 1963. This led towards the strengthening of the bilateral ties and in 1966 the military assistance began which led to the Chinese support to Pakistan in 1970-71 war with India. The nature of priorities have shaped the relations during the cold war years as US stick to its policy of containment and Pakistan remained central to its policy in the region rather than India whereas New Delhi's approach of non-alignment continued during the cold war and has remained a key defense partner of Soviet Union. However, India is remained warmonger. India began every war between India and Pakistan. (Fair C. Christine, 2014)

The purpose of the paper is to discuss the Indo-US relations and the challenges it posed to the China in the region. The paper also discuss the ways and means in which the interests of both the nations have shaped and pursued during the course of the history. However, competition between the US and China, on one hand, and between China and India, on the other, has opened the door for greater US-India cooperation since the end of the Cold War. (Tellis Ashley J., 2018)

The focus of the China has not been on India since the 1990s as they paid the special attention on developing relations with the European Union (EU), Japan, Russia and United States. But with the emergence of India in the 1990s as a regional power and its shift of policy due to the end of the cold war has changed the scenario. The nuclear tests of India conducted in 1998 and its military and political developments have a profound impact on the China due to its proximity with India, and its hostile relations over the border issue since 1962. At the turn of the century these developments have led the two states India and US close to each other and ultimately a strategic partnership was formed to continue the

cooperation in the political, security and economic fields, and face the challenges posed to them by the China. On the other hand US is acting as guarantor to the detrimental role of India in the future. (Op.cit, Fair C. Christine, 2014) Additionally, India-U.S. strategic cooperation have given rise to a certain unease in Beijing. (Tourangban Manish & Batt Pooja, 2018)

### **Historical Background**

The US looked towards India as a strategic partner to play a pivotal role against the communist threat in the region and hence US president Harry S. Truman was in favor of developing relations with the India, but the non-alignment policy advocated by the Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru has created a negative impact in the Washington. However, India under Nehru pursued a globally oriented foreign policy while trying to maintain a careful distance between the power blocs of the East and West. (Tamar Dr. Ravi, 2002) The US approach to deal both India and Pakistan has been influential in building their relations with the both states during the cold war years. US-India deal had a significant impact on Chinese perceptions. (Small Andrew, 2015)

There were events which influenced the Indo-US relations since 1947

- 1- India's rejection of US proposal to accept mediation to resolve the Kashmir issue was instrumental as the US was not prepared to take sides during the start of the cold war and was not ready to give any side an opportunity to join the communist bloc.
- 2- Indian role in the Korean War has been appreciated due to the non-aligned policy as India continued to play the role of neutral state and in 1950 India condemned the North Korea as an aggressor in the UN Resolution. But again has played a significant role to end the war by diplomatic role and sending the messages of both China and US.

The non-aligned policy has met with criticism in the Washington due to the fact that India wanted to balance the relations with both the blocs and did not wanted to take the sides in the cold war era. US has advised India not to recognize the communist government of PRC but India refused and recognized PRC in 1950.

- 3- Bad harvest and drought in India in 1950 compelled India to request for the aid from the foreign states and US has seen it an opportunity to support India, and the aid continued until 1959. The US aid during the period of 1947-59 reached to US\$ 1.7 billion which also includes the food worth of US \$ 931 million.

- 4- The cold war doctrine of containment was the most prominent approach adopted by the US to provide military and economic aid during the cold war years, and India also benefitted from that in the 1962 war with the PRC. US president John F. Kennedy in 1963 National Security Council meeting has insisted that India is our ally and should be supported like an ally against the Chinese aggression in future. The policy was mainly driven out of the fear of the Chinese superiority over the Indian, and the fear of communist takeover of the democratic state since India claims to be the largest democracy. The Kennedy approach was also the part and parcel of the US containment theory as they does not want a state to fall against the communist China, and wanted India to continue its resistance against the aggression even though the odds were against the New Delhi. The Mahabharata and Arthashastras are representative of an age of warfare, a reflection of India's long history of practically continuous war, strife, and division. (Engelmeier Tabias F., 2009)
- 5- The relations since Kennedy administration went to low level due to US policy towards the Pakistan and its role in the cold war years until the end of the cold war. US commitment towards some other states particularly to Pakistan which has led towards the downfall of the relations between both the states. The major reason was the Indian alliance developed with the Soviet Union over the years, and their commitment towards the non-aligned movement has further frustrated US policy makers, whereas Pakistan was fully committed towards the US policy of containment and its support to build the relations with the China in Sino-US rapprochement in 1970s. The year 1979 has further strengthened the bond between Islamabad and Washington due to the events in the year such as the Islamic Revolution of Iran which has overthrown the Reza Shah Pahlavi government (the US ally in the region) and established the new anti-American government. The other event has the most serious implications on the region was the Soviet occupation of the Afghanistan in the same year and this has led US to defend Pakistan the next target of the soviet as a buffer has been gone between Soviet union and western ally Pakistan.
- 6- US president Bill Clinton's visit in 2000 of India was the turning point in the relations of both the states. US initially in 1999 supported the Indian stance over Kargil war and defused the tension by pressurizing Pakistan to withdraw their forces from Kargil. The Kargil conflict it needs to be stressed that Kargil was not a one-off operation, but the latest in a series of moves and countermoves at a tactical level by India and Pakistan along the line of control in the inaccessible, snowbound Northern Areas. (Musharraf Pervaiz, 2006) This was one of the important periods of the history when US and India

realized that they were the natural allies, and has worked towards a partnership. During the presidential campaign of 2000 Condoleezza Rice has advocated for the strengthening of the relations with India in the region and her article from Condoleezza Rice in 2000 viewed India as a potential partner in the coming times.

- 7- 9/11, 2001 event has been a hallmark of the US policy in war on terror as it has brought Pakistan factor back in the US foreign policy due to its role as a frontline state in the war. Despite the US engagement in Mghanistan, India continued to enjoy the cordial relations with the Washington due to its emergence as a potential market in the region and a major challenger to the growing power of the Beijing. Infact, US is preparing India as a successor state in Mghanistan.(Op.cit, Fair C.Christine, 2018) The US lifted all the economic and military sanctions which were imposed after the 1998 nuclear weapons tests.
- 8- Development of the strategic partnership between both the states since the 2005 Indo-US Nuclear Deal which has transformed the relations towards formation of a nexus against the Chinese rise in the region of Asia Pacific as India was seen as a major challenger/competitor to the China in the region. But, the strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi will remain perpetually handicapped if trade relations between the two countries remain un-reformed.(Op.cit, Ashley,2018) The US provided support to India and their 2006 Indo-US Nuclear Treaty to the 2015 Logistics Treaty has been an effort to enhance the Indian capabilities to deal with the powerful China. While, Beijing continued to provide backing to Pakistan. (Op.cit, Small Andrew, 2015)

#### Chinese Rise: Challenges to India

- A) China remains a major security threat to the India due to their strained relations with the China since 1962 war over the boundary demarcation which India inherited from the British at the time of the partition. The military modernization has also raised concerns as their superiority in terms of numbers as well as quality describes the situation in favor of the Chinese is the real source of concern for the New Delhi. Not only that but Beijing has pursued its policy of building the web of alliances with the Indian neighbors such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and most important of them all is Pakistan. Nonetheless, three states could also use the framework that has been worked out under various treaties and bilateral agreements to enhance stability in the region. (Rajain Arpit, 2005)

- B) Chinese role in international forums has highlighted its importance vis-a-vis India. India has been concerned over the Chinese support to Pakistan in various international forums vis-a-vis India such as its blockage of Indian entry in the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and Chinese veto to Indian sponsored western backed resolution in UNSC over Molana Masood Azhar and branding Pakistan as a terror sponsor state. Not only that but has played a significant part by bringing Pakistan in SCO, ARF as well as the part of the BRI community, and has been supporting them on various issues facing on international forums and has raised their voice in support of the Chinese.
- C) South Asia is the nuclear flashpoint of the world. (Op.cit, Musharraf Pervez, 2006) Alliance with Pakistan is a major concern due to its rivalry with Pakistan. Pakistan and China established their relations in the 1950s which has shaped into a partnership after the 1963 border agreement, and the 1972 become a strategic partnership since then the relations have blossomed. The major reason was the India as both the states shares hostile relations with India due to the boundary issues which are still unsettled and has waged war with India multiple times. The alliance is only on the defence sector but also in economic sector also and the 2005 Treaty of friendship and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are landmark agreements to not only increase trade between them but also help Pakistan in building infrastructure as well as connect with the world through the Chinese greater plan known as Belt & Road Initiative (BRI). Sino-Pakistan alliance has created issues for the India as it has opposed the CPEC due to the fact that it crosses the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan which India claims as part of the disputed territory. Not only that but India is suspicious of Chinese use of Gwadar for commercial purposes as they feared that China might use the port as a naval port to achieve their military goals in the region. It also serves Beijing's strategic ambition to encircle India. And that makes Pakistan a natural ally. (Mourdoukoutas Panos, 2018) Moreover, since May 1998, India and Pakistan have mobilised forces more than twice and there has constantly been talk of limited war. (Op.cit, Rajain Arpit, 2005)
- D) Beijing support to India's neighbors has highlighted the undermining the Indian influence in the region. The smaller states like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and other states of the region views Beijing's rise as an opportunity not only to improve their economies by benefitting from Chinese growing economic muscles but also of strategic value as it presents an option to deter the Indian hegemonic designs in the region. Chinese policy of string of pearls and inviting the south Asian states to become part of the Chinese BRI project has been viewed as the greatest opportunity for these tiny states to come out of

Indian shadow and enhance their role in the region. Not only has that but their trade been blossoming with the China.

### Impact of Indo-US Relations Over China

The maintenance of high military profile abroad and displays of force-short-of-war are two elements of the interventionist thrust of America's globalist foreign policy posture. (Wittkopf Eugene R., Kegley Charles W., and Scott James M., 2003,) Indo- US relations over the time has evolved into an strategic partnership and they sees themselves allies in the region, and US policy of Rebalance Asia/ Asia Pivot Strategy unveiled by US president Barack Obama in 2011 in which US has marked India as key partner in the region to contain the growing influence of China. New Delhi has been expanding its role in the region and has pursued the active policy of Act East in 2014 which is the upgraded version of the Look East Policy formed in the 1990s to develop the friendly ties with the East Asian neighbors. Not only that but has developed alliances with the states such as Japan, South Korea and Australia to counter the Chinese threat in the region, and has invested in Vietnam and Thailand in order to extract minerals from the disputed South China Sea (SCS).

US Asia pivot strategy announced in 2011 which has been focused on the rebalancing influence in the Asia Pacific region vis-a-vis China, and reassure its traditional partners that US will not let them battle the Chinese growing power in the region. Not only has that but also reassured US commitment to continue its military support under the 2012 US Strategic Guidance Programme. India is a key state in US Asia Pivot strategy in order to deal the china threat, and with the growing Indo-US partnership there are chances that India and US will build a web of alliances to encircle China. New Delhi's approach of external balancing by building partnerships with other neighbors and powerful states is an indication that India and US are focused on the creation of balance of power in the region in their favor which at the moment is tilted towards China.

Beijing is pursuing the policy of the peaceful co-existence with the neighbors and has pursued it since 1978 effectively to achieve the greater economic goals, and it has been able to achieve these goals due to its patience and today emerged as one of the major economic contributor in the global economy and has unveiled its dream project of Belt and Road initiative (BRI) in 2013 to connect the Asia, Europe and African continents through the multiple lines of communications in order to expand the economic prosperity towards these regions. New Delhi and Washington views the Beijing's rise as a source of concern due to the fact that it's policy of String of Pearls and disputes in South China Sea (SCS) has threatened its allies and has affected their relations with other states. New Delhi views string



of pearls as a containment approach towards New Delhi in future as Beijing may deploy its forces on the ports it has built in Chittagong, Hambantota and Gwadar and encircle it and cause the naval blockade of the India.

China is become the manufacturing workshop of the world. (Dahlman Carl J., 2013) Beijing's road to peace can be disturbed by the India's objections over the route of the China-Pakistan Economic Cooperation (CPEC) as it passes through the Gilgit Baltistan province, which according to Indian claims is part of the disputed territory between both the nations since their independence in 1947. Whereas Indo-US partnership can be a serious concern for the Beijing due to their designs which aims to not only disturb the Chinese designs for prosperity but also to its allies. As Pakistan has been targeted by India over the years on the activities carried by the non-state actors, and the recent examples of Uri in 2018, and Pulwama attack in February 2019 shows that India blamed the terrorists attacks on Pakistan, and has been propagating that Pakistan is sponsoring the terrorist groups which Pakistan denied. Not only that but Indian influence in the region has been used to counter the Chinese influence which can become a serious concern for the Beijing's BRI project.

### **Conclusion**

The 21st century is called the Asian century as the center of the politics has been shifted towards the Asian region particularly the Asia Pacific region and since the China has been on the rise due to its economic growth over the three decades since its reforms in the late 1970s. India is seen as a potential competitor to the China in the region and US has looked as a partner to challenge the Chinese rise which will influence its interests in the region. The growing nexus between India and the US has created a challenge for China and has interfered in the Chinese traditional areas of influence in the region.while, CPEC has global trade implications (Sethi Mohammad Rafiq, 2018) and US and India are not in favour of this mega-billionaire project

India's location itself demands that it defines its own narrative in aligning with the United States to manage China's rise. China remains a proximate power and the U.S. a distant one. (Op.cit, Manish, 2018) Although New Delhi shares good trade relations with the Beijing and has trade of over US\$70 billion in 2015 which reached to over US\$ 84 billion in 2018 thus it today is the largest trading partner of India, and due to its symmetric imbalance of forces it is difficult for the India to challenge the China in the region. But with the partnership with the Washington New Delhi is more comfortable as it will be supported by the huge resources from the west, and its increased cooperation with the US allies in Asia such as Japan, South Korea and even Australia will be huge bonus for the Indian



security concerns, and making Indo-US strategic partnership a challenge for the Beijing in the coming years.

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