

## INDO-U.S. RELATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

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### INTRODUCTION

Global power structure has changed fundamentally in recent years and has influenced new patterns of bilateral and regional relationships. United States and India's ties reflect such a new pattern. For variety of reasons, South Asia has been relatively an area of secondary importance in U.S. strategic thinking. However it is also true that the South Asian region is at present receiving a higher level attention in Washington than it did in the past.

The recasted U.S. policies reflect the definite American tilt towards India. These policies are seen as acknowledgement of India's status as a regional power. Whether the widely perceived U.S. tilt towards India lacks substance or shows a paradigm shift in American policies is a question of vital importance for the security and stability of Pakistan. On account of its far reaching implications for the future of Pakistan, the issue deserves to be studied in depth.

### COLD WAR SCENARIO

Since 1947 American policy towards South Asia has been beset with problems. The mutual hostility between the two major regional states, India and Pakistan made it difficult for Washington to develop any meaningful relationship with one without antagonizing the other. From the very beginning of the cold war, American policies showed concern about the political and geo-strategic development in the South Asian region, as is amply evident from the remarks of Late American President John. F. Kennedy. Addressing the Senate on March 25, 1958, he said: "No thoughtful citizen

can fail to see our stake in the survival of free government in India".<sup>1</sup>

The distribution of power in South Asia was never a primary factor in shaping of American policies towards South Asia during cold war. These policies were neither devised to balance Indian conventional superiority nor were based on accepting New Delhi's self-assertive policies in the region. American strategic priorities during cold war period were influenced by U.S. rivalry with the former U.S.S.R. and threat perceptions by U.S.A.<sup>2</sup> Since the end of cold war, the U.S.A. and India have been focusing on the issues of low politics like trade, investment and transfer of technologies. contentious issues like Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) have been avoided to influence the new relationship.<sup>3</sup>

#### DYNAMICS OF INDO-U.S. RELATIONS

India's western orientation in terms of its political ideology, influence of its leaders in developing countries and its size made it a better choice for U.S.A. and the west. They found India closer to western ideas of democracy and secularism. Mahatma Gandhi's non-violent resistance against British, coincided with antiwar sentiments in the west. For these reasons India was thought of as natural ally to the west against the rising communist threat. In a broad sense, the developing and changing character of India, under an independent democratic system of government, appealed to west and the U.S.A.<sup>4</sup> Western leaders however misjudged, India's perception of the international order and its role as an Asian power. Coming out of long spell of colonial rule, the India's founding fathers had strong misgivings about the west and were not willing to re-embrace it under American leadership. Nehru advocated the mixed economy and merge of capitalism

and socialism. Nehru's policy of neutrality disappointed the Americans, who were enthusiastic about having India on their side. In spite of economic difficulties, India demonstrated its ability to exercise greater degree of independence in dealing with great powers. Neutrality didn't restrict India's access to both the western and the soviet bloc and it secured economic benefits from both sides of ideological divide. During the period of first cold war i.e. from 1951 to 1971, India did receive \$9,900 million as foreign aid from the U.S.<sup>5</sup> The U.S. and Russia competed with each other to win the Indian side by offering it economic and military assistance because of India's strategic position. India's policy of nonalignment coincided well with the Soviet diplomacy regarding the Third world. Moscow highlighted India's image as a friend and supporter of newly independent countries. Reluctance of India to join the American bloc helped Russia to counter the containment line.

Since 1951, the American involvement had grown with each passing year in the external relations, the interstate disputes and the internal affairs of important countries of South Asia. The introduction of large scale economic assistance and technical cooperation has added a new dimension to official American activities in South Asia. Military assistance has also been an important element of American relations with South Asia specially Pakistan and India.

India was critical about the association of U.S. with Pakistan in defence arrangements like South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 and Baghdad Pact (Later to become the Central Treaty Organization) (CENTO) in 1955. Both were meant for the security of South East Asia and West Asia. India termed these arrangements as hostile to its required interests.<sup>6</sup> The biggest test of Indo-U.S. relations was provided by

the Chinese attack on India in October 1962. As a result of prompt American response to India's request for military assistance in 1962. American relations with India improved, though it had an adverse effect on its relations with Pakistan. At a press conference former Ambassador Harry Barnes, was asked to name some occasions when the U.S. acted as a true friend of India. He replied in 1962 during the Chinese attack on India.<sup>7</sup> China - India War of 1962 and Sino-Soviet dispute marked a change in U.S. policies. This situation enabled the U.S. to exert its power and influence in the region. A major development in India's external relations was the East Pakistan War 1971 and the Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971. This was a testimonial of India's non-alignment policy from Moscow. These were the years when Moscow preferred friendships and alliances with Third World countries with one party rule and a non-capitalist course of development.<sup>8</sup> With the Russian intrusion in Afghanistan and an Islamic revolution in Iran in the decade of 80s, the strategic scenario of South Asia had completely transformed. During this period Pakistan emerged as a front line state to contain the communist advancement in the South. U.S.A. realized the strategic need of extending the economic and military assistance to Pakistan in the face of the Soviet threat. India objected and argued that the natural balance in sub-continent would be disturbed.<sup>9</sup> Washington had given a formal pledge to New Delhi that American weapons were intended solely to be used against communist aggressors and that America would not permit their use against India.<sup>10</sup>

India continued to support Moscow even after the cold war. While entire world community condemned the Russian aggression in Afghanistan, New Delhi accepted the Soviet justification for invasion and extended political and diplomatic support. Although Pakistan was a front

line state, it had never been in a position to influence American policy in South Asia. In November 1984, Reagan administration allowed the transfer of advanced technology to India, however a true strategic relationship couldn't evolve because of close relationship of India with U.S.S.R.<sup>11</sup>

#### CONVERGENCE OF INDO-U.S. INTERESTS

The new pro-India tilt in South Asia is not a sudden development but a result of a gradual convergence of interests between Washington and New Delhi which began after the end of the cold war. The collapse of the Soviet Union in early 90s not only diminished the importance of Pakistan in the American global strategy, it also removed the only irritant in India-U.S. relations. The principal cause of American indifference to India during the cold war period was Indo-Soviet special relationship. But after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the paramount reason for friction between Washington and New Delhi disappeared and it was only a matter of time for the convergence of interests to bring the two countries closer to each other.<sup>12</sup> There is strong Indo-US convergence on issues relating to liberalization, restructuring and expansion of the Indian economy. As American economic involvement in other parts of Asia is reaching a saturation point, India offers a potential market of commercial and industrial opportunities. But the extent of U.S. involvement in the Indian market will depend on the success of Vajpayee's government in liberalizing the economy. As a first step, it has opened the insurance sector to foreign investment, a longstanding U.S. demand.<sup>13</sup>

Since the beginning of 1990s it seems that the economic agenda is determining the Indo-US relations. India liberalized its economy and opened up vast

opportunities for American investment, allowed foreign firms to acquire 51% equity in all major domestic industries, foreign companies are granted permission to raise public funds and borrow from local financial institutions. Because of this attractive economic package, American interest is growing in the Indian market. In the first half of 1990, U.S.A. invested 26% of its direct foreign investment in India.<sup>14</sup>

The continuing decline of Russia, the rise of India's Asian rival China as an increasingly powerful and influential country and the consequent emergence of an imbalance of power in Asia have forced New Delhi to seek closer ties with the United States. In stead of focusing on short term ractical gains, Indian diplomacy has concentrated on building a stable and enduring relationship with the United States, in which there is no major conflict of interests between the two countries. Making a fundamental shift in Indian policy, the Vajpayee government has decided to build closer ties with the United States which is likely to remain the world's pre-eminent power in the foreseeable future. India's leverage in regional and world politics makes imperative the renewal of dialogue between the United States and India.<sup>15</sup>

#### DIVERGENCE OF INDO-US INTERESTS

Although no issue disturbs the evolving relationship of U.S. and India but on two security issues they differ:

1. Nuclear non-proliferation, and
2. Kashmir.

The potential for proliferation of a high scale military and nuclear technology among Third World States has become a matter of grave concern for the

Western powers. The US in this regard is very sensitive and quite specific about the containment of nuclear technology. With the emergence of Sino-Soviet rift, China became determined to have nuclear capability of its own. It was primarily the Chinese nuclear explosion in 1964, which caused India to go for nuclear. Consequently it was inevitable for Pakistan to let India have a free hand in the region. Given the Indo-Pak traditional hostility, the Indian nuclear explosion in 1974, gave tremendous impetus to Pakistan's nuclear programme. One can witness that within a spell of merely 10 years Pakistan was able to acquire the capability of producing its own nuclear weapons.<sup>16</sup>

Indo-Pakistan tension over Kashmir and the nuclear dynamic continue to remain major concerns for Washington. This was evident from the talks held on November 17, 1999 in London between India's External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh and US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott. The talk focussed on four issues that lie at the heart of the Indo-US nuclear dialogue. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), missile material production, export control of sensitive products and technologies and India's defense posture. The statement issued at the end of the talks showed that no progress could be made on the nuclear issue. The two sides continue to remain divided over the CTBT and India's desire to deploy a minimum nuclear detement.<sup>17</sup>

India endeavours to create a symbolic power, equivalence with China. India believes that it can achieve the world power status by acquiring nuclear and missile capabilities. India successfully tested Agni missile, an intermediate Range Ballistic missile with a range of 1500-2500 kms., capable of delivering conventional and nuclear warheads. India already developed and installed Prithivi, a short-range missile.

The US is worried over the India's missile and nuclear programme, as these undermine the validity of NPT and CTBT and it requires India and Pakistan to freeze, cap or roll back their nuclear programmes. Since India is neither prepared to sign CTBT in the immediate future nor willing to spell out its concept of minimum nuclear deterrence, no progress is possible on the nuclear issue and non-proliferation is likely to remain a major irritant.<sup>18</sup> Even if India signs the CTBT, it will not ratify it as long as China does not do so and Beijing will not oblige as long as Washington does not ratify it. This issue may stand in the way of Indo-US strategic cooperation. Washington cannot encourage New Delhi's ambition to acquire extra regional nuclear capability, which is the prime objective of India's new nuclear doctrine.

#### **THE KASHMIR DISPUTE**

The other issue over which United States and India differ is Kashmir. Historically, the US considers the Kashmir as dispute, which could be resolved by dialogue. Addressing the UN General Assembly in September 1993, US President Bill Clinton, listed the conflict in Kashmir with other civil, ethnic and religion wars going on the world.<sup>19</sup> This American Stand on Kashmir, contradicts the Indian view of Kashmir as its integral part. India has stationed more than half million troops in Kashmir to suppress the Kashmiris. India has been committing atrocities in Kashmir and has grossly violated the human rights. The Kashmiris and US media tried to bring the Indian atrocities to the public attention, but mild references in official statement and citations of human rights violations by US and world community never compelled India to make concessions on Kashmir. The United States views the Kashmir issue as a flash point in South Asia which can bring India and Pakistan to blows. The most explicit reference to the human rights abuses in valley came from the US Assistant Secretary of

State, Robin Raphel in October 1993. She dismissed the Indian justifications for human rights violations in these words, "making people disappear, encounter killings, extra judicial executions, death in custody, all this stuff, frankly, there is no excuse for".<sup>20</sup> Challenging Kashmir's accessions to India, she said, "we view Kashmir as a disputed territory and that means we do not recognize the instrument of accession as meaning that Kashmir is forever more an integral part of India".<sup>21</sup>

However the Clinton administration's stress on human rights and its acknowledgement of the disputed status of Kashmir touched Indian sensitivities. Following a stiff Indian protest, US officials have become more cautious about pressing India on this controversial issue. Though the US acknowledged the disputed status of Kashmir, it opposed the idea of a plebiscite, making it clear that the country was against taking the issue to the UN security council or any other international forum.<sup>22</sup> The current US policy on Kashmir, which is based on dealing the issue in very general terms without reference to the right of self determination of the people of Kashmir, appears as a shift and is in contrast to the earlier US stand on Kashmir. The United States acknowledges that the Kashmir dispute should be settled peacefully, however the US itself is not sure what role it should have to play in the dispute. On one hand there is question of gross violations of human rights by Indian army in Kashmir and on the other it emphasizes Pakistan to abstain from supporting the freedom fighters. According to some analysts, US is in favour of third option i.e. Independent Kashmir, in order to establish its strategic foot hold in the region, closer to China and Central Asia.<sup>23</sup>

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

Indo-US relationship and prospects of its expansion may work against the interests of smaller South Asian countries, particularly Pakistan. The United States, after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, left Pakistan alone to deal with the messy, complex and dangerous legacy of the Afghan war in which United States had been actively engaged for a decade. United States initiated policy of sanctions against Pakistan, a country which stood firm to serve US interests against Soviet invasion. What implications do the growing Indo-US relations have for Pakistan? The American expanding cooperation with India may send a wrong message to India's neighbours. Washington's policy of disengagement from Pakistan goes in India's favour in two significant ways. First, Pakistan's security links with the US to build a relatively modern defense infrastructure would be affected. Pakistan's military system in terms of equipment will become obsolete over time and will require replacement. Pakistan will find it hard to contract for new weapon system. The US-Pakistan relationship is a dependency relationship. Besides material dependency there is also a sense of political and psychological dependency within Pakistan. To halt the Pakistan's nuclear programme, the US administration passed the discriminatory amendment i.e. Pressler Amendment, which virtually blocked the way of supply of military hardware to Pakistan.

The refusal to sell high performance weapons to Pakistan (from Carter administration's refusal to sell A-7 attack aircrafts to Clinton administration's refusal to sell F-16 aircrafts) has left Pakistan without strong and reliable external source of military equipment. The withdrawal of American support for Pakistan has led to an expanded set of US involvement with India.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, emergence of China as a South Asian power

may increase India's standing in American strategy for the region. West has not overcome its traditional mistrust of China. Thus, by helping India for any balancing role in Asia the US would destabilize the Pakistan's security environment as well as the region. The US intension to support India as nuclear counter weight in a post cold war system of containment of China will also shatter the foundations of the US policy of nuclear non-proliferation in South Asia.

The fact is that American diplomatic, political and economic support to India is more clear than its support for Pakistan in the past. Washington's support for India on Kargil, India's five days visit by President Clinton as compared to Pakistan's five hours short stay and establishment of a Joint Working Group (JWG) by USA and India to combat terrorism are few gestures of India-US strategic relationship. The crucial question for Pakistan is the depth and dimension the growing Indo-US ties can acquire.

In the coming years the geo-strategic interests of India and America may lead to an arrangement under which India will assume some of the security functions now being discharged by Washington. India has always nurtured the ambition of establishing its hegemony over the Indian Ocean sea lanes, a matter of grave concern not only to Pakistan but also to Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Gulf States.<sup>25</sup> Pakistan has been supporting non-proliferation goals and has forwarded several proposals for a nuclear free region in South Asia, but when India cannot give up its nuclear option and is granted tacit recognition as a nuclear power by the United States, Washington should not expect Pakistan to unilaterally renounce its nuclear option. American policy towards South Asia is based on adhocism. Any future effort on the part of the United States to strengthen

India in an order to balance the rising power of China will have serious implications for Pakistan.

The most daunting challenge to Pakistan's foreign policy today is to ensure that the emerging political and strategic understanding between New Delhi and Washington does not undermine Pakistan's vital security and strategic interest. Even after the end of the cold war, Pakistan being a leading Islamic country, located in a volatile but strategically crucial area, continues to be important to the US. Pakistan should play its cards skillfully. The best course under the circumstances will be that, while protecting its national and strategic interests, it should be responsive to important US concerns.

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