

An Analytical Overview of US-India Relations

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Abstract

The rapidly changing international world scenario demands more time to move on dealing with economic and security challenges. In this perspective, the purpose of this article is to take an analytical overview of two strategic partners' relations, India and the United States of America. These both countries have their own specific agendas to pursue their interests. The diplomatic events in the Indian foreign policy proved that the Indian political leadership focused on tactical relations with the international community in the pursuing of national interests. Profiled responsible institutional attitude placed India to play a vital and meaningful role in the regional and international politics. That is why the '123Agreement' opened a new dimension of US India relations to avail new challenges and opportunities. Again the revival of the New Great Game in Central Asian region forced India to understand the US presence in Afghanistan as tactfully and strategically. Irrespective of common clashes and interest, it is observed that Washington showed serious reservations to those steps, which can encircle to economic and strategic benefits of Indians.

Introduction

Before proceeding to actual discussion on this issue, it may be mentioned here that to response to changing developments is the classified attitude of a dynamic foreign policy. A state always prefers to have strategic and time tested relationship with other regional and global states. Recognizing a dividing line between domestic and external matters of a state should be considered as a focused point in placing the economic and security challenges in the process of formulating foreign policy. About Indian foreign policy, it is said that it stands for multidimensional and consultative process of thought and action. Furthermore traditionally it has been maintained on national consensus. Effective instrument for implanting India's foreign policy reflected improved mature strengthened credibility of Indian democratic institutions. The recent US-India Civil Nuclear deal (123 Agreement) reflects the democratic dialogue process of the Indian institutions.

India's security needs in terms of strategic and economic perspective have been remained at critical level. On the North-West, it borders Pakistan while on the North-East; China is geographically attached with it. Besides these factors,

India has serious concerns with Afghanistan and Central Asian States because the Islamist militant organizations strong footage remained a cause of evolving so called terrorism (Indian's stance) in Kashmir. After 9/11 event, there is no doubt that the Indian government fully advocated to American idea of attacking Afghanistan for eliminating so called terrorist networks but it simultaneously showed reservations about America's long term plan to keep its presence in the region.

Principles of Nehruism: Age of Independence

Jawaharlal Nehru said: 'we have to develop close and direct contacts with the other nations and to cooperate with them in the furtherance of world peace and freedom. We propose as far as possible to keep away from the power politics of groups aligned against one another which led in the past two World Wars and which may again lead to discuss an even vaster scale. We believe that peace and freedom are indivisible and the denial of freedom any where must endanger freedom elsewhere and lead to conflict and war.'¹ Most significant principle of Indian foreign policy after 1947 was Non-Alignment which expressed the idea of remaining neutral during Cold War politics. The politics observers argued that Washington's warm reception to Nehru was successfully diplomatic attempt to establish Block Politics relations with Washington. In exchange of these developments, Nehru's intentions were to entertain maximum benefits as per to join Block Politics. Irrespective of overshadowing, New Delhi attempted to give high priority to relations with all the global states. For achieving high level international spectrum and for adjusting relations with neighboring states India focused on to be remained non-align during block politics.²

With the independence of India and Pakistan, both countries faced most difficult and bitter dispute, i.e., Kashmir which later compelled Pakistan to join American camp. It was hoped in Pakistan that Washington having influence in world politics due to its strong military and economic ties with rest of the world, Kashmir issue will be resolved so Pakistan's life line survival will not be remain at stake. Survival of national agriculture and industrial development was dependent on the flow of water, naturally from Kashmir. Lovett declared that 'United States is spread with thinly in its present commitments.'³ In the meanwhile, the Indian government stated that Pakistan intentionally violated boundaries and interfered in Kashmir by assisting Pathans involvement in Indian Territory (Kashmir). The UK foreign office made a similar assessment in January, 1948: 'Pakistan authorities in NWFP - no doubt helped the tribals - with respect to supplies and transport and the Pakistani government did not attempt to stop incursion. They may have known in advance what was intended but there is no evidence that it occurred on their initiative.'⁴

It was at the United Nations General Assembly's session in October 1948, when Liaquat Ali Khan met the then US Secretary of State and identified him the problems faced by newly born Pakistan. Liaquat Ali Khan said to his counterpart that it was 'unthinkable that Pakistan could fall prey to Communism since (Communism was) against Islam and thus he urged the United States to provide economic help to Pakistan and the nations of Middle East as it did for Europe. He also described Indian attitude as hostile towards Pakistan and further outlined official statement that Pakistan's first priority is peace but in case of Indian government aggressive reaction it had right to defend its sovereignty.⁵ Secretary of State was pleased to listen to Liaquat Ali Khan's comments about Communism and assured him that the Kashmir dispute will be settled in accordance with the United Nations willingness to its words.⁶ The issue of Kashmir was the most important factor apart from others to show inclination towards America. On the other side, the American government remained in contact with the British Government without breaking away carefully by maintaining a neutral path. It is observed that Pakistan received a positive impression but as such no clear meanings. The Kashmir dispute remained largely outside the scope of the Cold War. Moscow's cool or on some occasion semi-hostile attitude towards Pakistan was to identify the ground realities of the region. Policy pattern was shifted when in January, 1952 Jacob Malik, Soviet Representative to the United Nations charged that 'the West intended to transform Kashmir and Pakistan into a military springboard against USSR and China.'⁷

The Pakistani officials always advocated to a pro-West policy orientation just for the sake of attaining maximum diplomatic support of Washington for facing Indians hostile attitude. As for the attention required for Kashmir, Washington was intentionally not interested to provide any support to Pakistan. No doubt, Communism was the American problem, but the Pakistani officials were willing to be in the lap of the American government for achieving economic and military assistance to overcome those inherited partition problems. Because of New Delhi's more or less neutral attitude, Washington's attitude was not in favor of Pakistan as it was expected to be. For the first time, Pakistan's hopes deemed when Nimitz resigned from his responsibility as Plebiscite Administrator after three years of a continuous meaningless job. He said: 'No mediation effort in Kashmir is going to succeed as long as Mr. Nehru maintains his present un-statesman like attitude.'⁸ On this event, British office informed to the States Department South Asia Director Donald Kennedy that the 'Kashmir remained the main barrier – until this question was out of the way, little could be done to bring Pakistan into the Western Alliance'⁹.

Joining SEATO and CENTO was a clear sign to join the Western camp, although still Pakistan remained fail to receive Washington's support on Kashmir. On the other hand India without ignoring and preferring any single super power articulated, its foreign policy options on an open basis and

advocated to the idea of Non-Alignment movement. Communist ideology whether it was the Moscow issue or not but Kashmiri officials treated it as an opposing factor to Pakistan's ideology. S.M. Burke stated in his book entitled, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Historical Analysis*: 'However, Pakistan was once again told by her western friends that she would not get from the alliance what she needed most, i.e., protection against India. When the US joined the military committee of the Baghdad Pact, she stated that her participation was related solely to the Communist menace and carries no connotations with respect to intra-area matters. British Defense Minister Duncan Sandys declared that both Britain and America had promised to defend the Baghdad Pact region against Communist aggression only.'¹⁰

Indian policy makers focused on ground realities in the light of examining its internal problems, potentials, and challenges and refused the idea of 'one way treat'. Some Indian analysts argued that it was the time which demanded national decision making and leadership attitudes from Nehru. During Nehru's tenure as Prime Minister (1947-64) he focused on domestic consensus on defining national interests and foreign policy objectives and made up the minds of the Indians to base a unified and integrated nation state based on secularism and democracy and further finally to decide a meaning role in world political spectrum in future.¹¹ Indian government treated China as an important member of Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) but it did not ignore the Soviet Union's importance in the region. Joining of the West camp by Pakistan and Nehru's personal thinking to consider the West's imperialism as a legacy of colonialism, significantly kept the Soviet Union as a weightage state. In the same way, on various occasions, India showed serious reservations in case of Washington's regional importance. In the meanwhile, Indian government advocated to the idea of Pushtunistan promoted by the Kabul Government. So, the Indian foreign policy makers encircled Pakistan without joining block politics.

Indo-US Relations and Gulf Region

Multifaceted diplomacy in the Indian foreign policy has been remained the main instrument to examine the world's changing environment.¹² Increasing influence of Washington in the Gulf States and as a strong advocator of the Israeli occupation of Palestine, India adopted a time oriented thinking. It was difficult for New Delhi to ignore or to oppose to the Muslims Gulf States having oil resources at the same time it did not recognize Israel and established bilateral relations with the Gulf States instead of following alliance political relations. The core objective of the Indian foreign policy has always been to 'engage' instead of 'isolation' or 'opposition'. On the issue of the Israel-Palestine conflict, Indian government maintained its credibility among the Indian Muslims whose ideological association was with Palestine. In response, although the Palestine leadership received diplomatic support from Pakistan yet in reverse latter's expectations did not come true as hoped. The Indian analysts argued that multi-

faceted diplomacy is the required feature to meet those challenges, attached with growing economy and uncertain regional circumstances including internal problems especially in context of Kashmir.¹³

Place of China in Indian Foreign Policy

Interestingly, Indian focus has been to balance the interest with different states and of different states to India for playing a major and meaningful resale at regional and global level.¹⁴ In the presence of China as a nuclear state and having boundary conflict including bad experience of war, Indian government advanced itself and followed nuclear foreign policy to balance opportunities and challenges within regional political matters. In the 1960's, India rejected Pakistan's offer of South Asian free nuclear zone and intensified nuclear strategy in the light of changing regional circumstance.¹⁵ In 1974, India explored nuclear weapons and officially declared nuclear doctrine for a peaceful purpose instead of having malicious plans. Pakistan's close ties with China and American secret visit to China were the developments visualized as alarming situation for India. No doubt, India was fully aware that Sino-US dialogues were established only to counter Moscow's communism, but Pak-China ties were serious security concerns because on Kashmir issue China has also shown its reservations with India. The Indian defense analysts argued that China led India to be nuclear power because of a competing power in the region. On the issue of China, no doubt, Americans have the same perceptions and these common strategies (India-America) were evolved to extract each other from balancing the multidimensional thinking. Despite of these common challenges, the American government failed to receive India's diplomatic support on the issue of Soviet Union's invasion into Afghanistan. Although, besides NAM member, it should condemn to Soviet influence in Afghanistan by force yet it preferred to keep itself out from the game of chess. After facing a lot of criticism at NAM forum it officially condemned Soviet's interference in Afghanistan but instead of using the direct word 'Soviet Union', it talked generally itself giving a dressing down to the Soviet Ambassador in New Delhi. According to an Indian official source, 'if India did not take a pro-Soviet line, American would ignore them.'¹⁶ Barjesh Misra Chandra said that the Soviet position in Afghanistan should be examined in the line of action of those unidentified resources which are involved in assisting rebels from financial, military, and logistical points of view.¹⁷ Furthermore, he said that Afghanistan invited Soviet forces so it all happened. Indian stance changed when Washington-Islamabad strategic relationship established and its Minister of External Affairs Narsimah Rao stated: 'It is time to ask ourselves this Afghanistan has not become or is not likely to become a pretext for those who wish to create further instability in that country.'¹⁸ During official visit to Washington Rajiv Gandhi in June, 1985 stated: 'The Soviets were invited into Afghanistan.'¹⁹ On being questioned on the hypocrisy of India's stand on Afghanistan he replied perhaps you should define intervention for me referring of course to Grenada.²⁰

Indian Afghanistan interaction had been remained long past of those events which led to the cause of Old Great Game and generated the reasons of Durand Line in the matter of pursuing Forward Policy.²¹ One the issue of Soviet Union intervention in Afghanistan, the Indian government adopted two track policies. The Indian perspective whether USSR remained in Afghanistan or not to which extend it was possible to exert power of understanding regional realities when Pakistan's nuclear program was on development process and Washington tilted towards Islamabad. Mutual collaboration between the two intelligence agencies, i.e., ISI and CIA left no room for India to keep away itself from Afghanistan. During the assessment of ground realities, New Delhi's political observers argued that during Cold War political era, Indian government did not strictly followed NAM principles but treated to global politics into the context of bipolar world where Indian government discussed time line issues rather than ideologies. The same capacity level of diplomacy can be observed in President Nixon's (America) speech when he said that: 'After a period of confrontation, we are entering in an era of negotiations, let all nations know that during this administration our lines of communication will be open. We seek an open world - open to ideas, open to exchange of goods and people, a world in which no people great or small will live in angry isolation. We cannot expect to make every one our friend but we can try to make no one our enemy.'²²

Indian foreign policy towards bipolar world was on the same pattern where the state's institutions are strengthened to address the balance of interests by keeping weightage of the superpower. In case of Afghanistan, India maintained its diplomatic statements either not in mood of encouraging or discouraging. In February, 1981 New Delhi approached to the Soviet-Afghanistan crisis as an issue of South Asia as a whole whereas Islamabad insisted on mentioning specific reference to Afghanistan. Indian government to some extent prepared to discuss nature of Soviet-Afghanistan problem but it did not linkage it with Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.²³ On NAM forum, Indian government faced a diplomatic defeat when official NAM stance appeared in the form of 'a political settlement on the basis of withdrawal of foreign troops, full respect for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-aligned status of Afghanistan and strict observance of the principles of non-intervention and non interference.'²⁴

The Changing Scenario: Bi-Polar to Uni-Polar

The military stalemate, political, economic, and military cost of the Soviet leadership became the major reasons for Soviet Union disintegration. The changing international political scenario from bipolar to uni-polar was the main cause of strengthening ties between New Delhi and America. Although Indian government realized this gesture but at the expense of Soviet's friendship it could not be possible. Officially, New Delhi maintained its diplomatic standards

to treat Russia after disintegration as second super power but it is observed that it recognized Israel as legitimate sovereign state. During 1950s and 1960s, the Indian government's attitude towards America as to be or not to be that is the question but in 1970s New Delhi intentionally moved to Soviet Union to do efforts to realize pressure as a whole in South Asian politics.²⁵ During this phase Washington-New Delhi political bargaining remained at not satisfactory level but after Soviet disintegration, Washington steered to New Delhi to join as a 'Strategic Partner' to counter China as declared by the US State Department as a 'strategic competitor'²⁶.

Recognition of Israel was a major shifting policy feature of the Indian government in matter of its relations with the Muslim Gulf states. No doubt, within the sphere of the level of understanding of common interests, it was not difficult to access to new technology and new resources for meeting new challenges. Still the Gulf War I (Iraq–Kuwait) reflected the period of transitional world politics which introduced New World Order in sustaining credibility of American global hegemonic status at entire global level. The transitional phase of international changing circumstances is leading to open new options on foreign policy issues. Transformation of bipolar to uni-polar world was examined by the Indian government in the light of examining Kashmir issue, nuclear non-proliferation, China as growing regional power, Pakistan's presence in Afghanistan and the New World Order.

It was looking obvious that India now will dependent on America but it will not over shadow its own foreign policy. Afghanistan and New Delhi begun to remove that phase of isolation evolved during Soviet-Afghan war. Indian government enhanced its relations with those ethnic Afghan groups and Mujahedeen during the Afghan Civil War whose associations were with Iran, Moscow and anti-Islamabad. No doubt, it seemed that Afghanistan will not remain in cutting position of India and after Najib Ullah's regime collapsed, it was assumed that India has no more part of game. According to Satish Chandra (Indian High Commissioner) in Islamabad: 'Dr. Najib Ullah was acceptable to royalists, communists, all ethnic groups, and the Afghan alike and he was amenable to suggestions.'²⁷ It is noteworthy that, one of the major factors of supporting Najib Ullah was that of his role as a bridge between New Delhi and Moscow.

It may be mentioned here that as some of the former Afghan Mujahideens were pro-Indian, Washington-New Delhi examined ground realities in their own national interests perspectives. India collaborated with China, Russia, Iran, and Central Asian States. It was reported that 'Indian Cargo Planes landed on the 15th, 16th, 21st, and 27th June, 1995 with two or three air craft landing on each occasion'²⁸. The purpose of the involvement was to boost up the Rabbani government against Taliban organization. On the other side, Washington's interests were to dominate the pipe lines projects derived from Central Asian

States to Afghanistan and then leading to entire Asia and Europe. A specific US company 'UNOCAL' was hopeful that stability in Afghanistan if Taliban succeeded to establish would place America strategically and economically as a global power so American area of interest was 'peace and stability'. In pursuing the Taliban policy, Islamabad was looking for a 'strategic depth' and access to Central Asian States market. Indian policy makers did effort to establish regional ties for evolving a specific environment in which its intention was cleared to highlight Taliban's policies based on extremism and sectarianism and separatism in the light of security threat to the region. Recognition of Taliban government in Afghanistan by Pakistan including Saudi Arabia and UAE was short sighted achievement for Islamabad because in OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) the Afghanistan's seat had remained vacant.²⁹

On Afghanistan issue, US-India relations remained not at confrontation level but both were seeking and following those paths suited to them. The developments turned into favor of the Indian government when America-Pakistan-Taliban 'heydays' were over and Brajesh Mishra addressing to American Jewish Committee said: 'India-US-Israel Axis in established form is the need of hour. India-US-Israel all are facing the common threat of modern day 'terrorism' and hence should form an alliance that will have the political will and moral authority to take bold actions in extreme cases of terrorist provocation.' Furthermore, he added that 'such an alliance would not get logged down in definitional and causal arguments about terrorism.' According to him 'the United States and Israel have some fundamental similarities and stronger India-US relations and India-Israel relations therefore have a natural logic.'³⁰

Because of the US assistance to Taliban, India adopted 'distinct pro-US' policy but when US Taliban chemistry did not match, spectrum to locate the common interest was changed.³¹ To achieve core objectives, India attempted to link Taliban's terrorism with Kashmiri Mujahedeen's freedom movement. Second, it was New Delhi's intention to marginalize Islamabad's importance before Washington and offered US its soil to eliminate the terrorist network. President Bush announced that India is treated as strategic partner and Kashmir issue should be resolved by developing mutual understanding between Pakistan and India. As the American role to solve the Kashmir issue, India has no intention to read this line. It was obvious that India-US relations reached its apex and Islamabad's role was marginalized only to 'War on Terrorism' as a front line state. Given non-NATO ally status to Pakistan, US was anxious to establish India-US Civil Nuclear Deal. Finally thought provoking bilateral negotiations, the Agreement 123 was signed.³² India prepared to separate its civil program from the nuclear program where US had to change its congressional laws by doing amendments. While commenting on Islamabad reservations about 123 Agreement, Richard Boucher stated: 'Our energy dialogue with Pakistan is going to be different than our energy discussions with India. One should not

expect that (Pakistan's) energy needs would be met the same way given different geography, different history, and different resource base.³³ The US Energy Secretary Samuel Bondman stated strategic partnership with Pakistan does not include discussion on Civilian Nuclear Energy. It was not at all the subject of my discussions with the Pakistani authorities.³⁴ The political observers argued that one school of thought considered India-US deal as 'Good by Mr. Nehru' whereas second school of thought said that for future growing security and internal and external economic challenges India needs such a deal but it has potential to maintain its sovereignty and agreement will not be at the expense of regional bilateral and trilateral relations. India welcomed to American presence in the region but it has expressed same reservations as China, Russia, and Iran have that long term American presence in the region will have more complicated security threat challenges.³⁵

In the meanwhile India focused on resolving disputed boundary issue with China and opened Sikkim China-India border for the trading purpose. One another important development favored to Washington was that India ruled out India-Pakistan-Iran (IPI) gas pipeline project. Although India has given space to America yet it stated that Iran has right to keep in process its nuclear program. The India's statement about Tehran and on the Afghanistan issue both favored to the idea of political dialogue instead of ethnic political environment. Besides this India has established strong relations with regional and international players particularly by propagating the issue of Muslim militants in Central Asian and their threat to regional security. Both US and India have joint sentiments that unless Afghanistan's soil is empty from the so called terrorist organizations network the peace and stability will remain fiction. The international media and community advocated to the idea of launching military operation in Pakistan and along with it they raised questions whether Pakistan's nuclear program is safe or not. Pakistani official stated that as being front line state actor, Pakistan's role cannot be ignored and already they are facing terrorism, and 'Operation Rah-i-Rast' has been remained successful to eliminate terrorism. It is observed that Islamabad remained fail to establish a link between foreign policy objectives and current crisis of governance.

In this perspective, it is noteworthy what Subhash Kapila said. In his words: 'Foreign Policy of any nation does not function in vacuum. It is a product of the prevailing international environment and country's insides in term of its geo-strategic location, economic health, military strength, and domestic stability.'³⁶ A brief analysis of the Indian approach to deal America revealed one factor of normalizing, enlarging and engagement and to look for alternatives as a second factor. Most important challenge for India today is how to walk on tight rope with Washington and how to engage itself to face internal and external pressures.

Since 1960s, India has strategic relationships with Russia and also, its military has considerable dependence on Russian arms. On the other hand, India is a

huge market for Russian goods. With China, India focused on enhancing its trade and it is successful to promote its trade to more than ten billion dollars per annum. Boundary settlement issues are also in dialogue process. One of the important developments is India-China military exercises and contacts favored to Indians. Although India observed that because of its close ties with Washington, China is no doubt engage with it yet it (China) has slow dialogue development process. On the Gawader project, China assisted Pakistan and further provided naval assistance and finally enhanced its circle of trade relations with Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia.³⁷ No doubt, India has established economic and military relations with America but it also did not ignore the rising value of 'euro' in international affairs. With Israel, India has a mutual consent that nuclear Pakistan is a continuous threat and emphasized to strengthen more bilateral civil and military relations pursued with same intensity.

Conclusion

The 'New Great Game' identified the relationships between New Delhi and Washington with new challenges and opportunities, now question is how to access in these prevailing circumstances. The struggle for Central Asian Oil is a multifaceted game. No doubt, the issues of gas pipeline and oil politics attracted regional states concerns, but also equally important are the internal and external environment particularly with regard to extremism, terrorism, security risk, which in fact, led to redefining and reshaping national and international policy parameters. India has approached the SCO and CIS and accommodated to China and Russia by keeping strong military and trade relations with America. In this environment, it also facilitated American interests in Afghanistan as well in the entire region.

Main component of Indian Foreign Policy is its economic diplomacy.³⁸ During his visit to New York in 2004, Manmohan Singh gave a warm expression and assured to establish strategic partnership but without assuming China as a regional competitor. Secretary of State Rumsfeld passed memorable statement that in the perception of specific issues, America and India have same objectives and thus sharing of ideas and understanding of a range of interaction will be mutually helpful to work out on shared concerns. It is interesting to note that Washington showed hesitation to take those steps which can ensure India's defense preparedness be compromised.

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