

US Foreign Policy towards India in Post 9/11 Era: Implications for South Asian Security

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Abstract

The strategic balance of the South Asia is maintained through two basic factors; first, Nuclear Deterrence which includes nuclear doctrines, missile development and nuclear weapons. Second important feature is “role of major powers”. It is obvious fact that strategic stability of South Asia is maintained through the US involvement especially after nuclearization hence, balance of power. Even if we discuss the case of Pakistan it is obvious that most of the Pakistan’s defense related equipment are either produced by the US or obtained through its financial and political assistance. In this discussion if we ignore the role of China then it will be negligence at our part but facts are never denied and we must know that America has major contributions in strengthening the Pakistan defense mechanism. In this scenario US tilt towards India will put sever impacts on Pakistan militarily and ultimately will lead the whole South Asian region towards the imbalance of power. Because convergence of US interests with India will ultimately lead US to prefer India on political, defense and economic fronts vis-a-vis other states of the region and its side effects will have far reaching implications for regional security.

Keywords: Foreign Policy, Balance of Power, Strategic Balance, Diplomacy, South Asia

Introduction

Foreign policy, as a concept emerged when the earliest human societies began to interact with each other. Foreign policy behavior means those actions which states take towards each other. Foreign policy of a state is usually named as a policy for the smooth functioning of international relations which consists of various sets of objectives and interests to describe and outline how a specific state will ensure its interaction with the other states on economic, political, social and military platforms and at the minimum level how that state will commence its interaction with non-state actors. (Acharya, 2004)

Now a days, it is commonly believed that world is a global village and all states are its various parts. These states cannot live in isolation as they all are dependent on each other in order to fulfill their needs. So they always have to develop their relations with one another. For the development of their relations these states interact with each other and for this purpose all states make their efforts to regulate their own attitudes

Security and stability is always the first priority of national policy of any state in the existing world. In the South Asian perspective, states are mainly considered insecure

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and instable owing to inter-state and intra-state conflicts. By nature, these conflicts are of political, territorial, ideological and of many other kinds. In this regional environment, states use and opt various kinds of strategies to secure themselves and their interests. Among all these strategies, alliance making is one of the most prominent of all. In South Asian region, US and Indian common objectives also brought them close to each other. India wants the status of regional power and US wants to contain China in order to maintain its superiority. Both India and US claim to be the champion of democracy in the world and believe that they must go for any point to ensure global democratic values. These kinds of common interests brought both states closer to each other and they even went for the Nuclear Deal between them. Which will not only disturb the regional security environment but it will also result in imbalance of power. (Lobe J, 2010)

Pakistan and India are two nuclear states of South Asia and always remain in continuous phase of enmity. Indo US strategic cooperation will cause serious concerns not only for the Pakistan but for the region as well. This will obviously result in shift of the balance of power towards India and undoubtedly result will be destruction, political and economic instability and aggravation and increase in enmity rather than friendship in South Asia. Another factor is that India and Pakistan are nuclear states and in case of any serious clash result will be the more fatal than expectations and there will be the no more peaceful existence of the region. The possession of sophisticated weapons like biological, chemical and physical nuclear weapons would be proved dangerous and destructive for South Asian region. International political thinkers and scholars of South Asia have already pointed out the fear of this nuclear flashpoint many times in their articles and research works.

Terrorism, nuclear terrorism and nuclear deals are putting oil on fire in deteriorating the security structure and putting serious threats to the peace of South Asia. At present, United States of America is busy to fight with terrorists in Afghanistan along with allies. The forces of Pakistan are curbing the roots of terrorism in their home for domestic and regional peace and stability. On the other hand, Indian attitude is much more different as it has no good and cordial relations with its adjacent states which is more alarming situation for the South Asia. (Strategy, 2013)

Under these circumstances the role of US is very pivotal and US must opt balanced policies towards this region so that balance of power could not divert to any side and peace could be ensured at all levels. This will not only bring prosperity and development in South Asia but it will also endorse American claim of a real champion of democracy. It is high time to step forward and settle all the disputes through peaceful means for regional security, stability, development with prosperity in place of other coercive means used by the brutal states. World Leadership should also take flexible and bold steps to settle the differences between states of South Asia for a peaceful world. These steps needed composite dialogue, Confidence Building

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Measures (CBMs), Track II and Back-Channel diplomacy for peaceful conflict resolution & management. (Neack, 2014)

US foreign policy towards India: A Historical Background

There is a large number of prominent Indian leaders who had very cordial relations with US in pre independence era which lasted for a long time of span even after independence in 1947. In 1954, Pakistan joined Central Treaty Organization to make an alliance with US. At that time India prefer to choose Russian alliance as it wanted to counter Pakistan in the South Asian region. In the year 1961, India took another step and became the member of the Non Aligned Movement to show its neutrality in the Cold War. Nixon administration provided some support to Pakistan during the war in 1971 which further deteriorated the relations between US and India till the collapse of USSR. In the era of 1990s, Indian foreign policy moved towards the unipolar world and again started to develop healthy relations with the United States.

With dawn of 21st century, US foreign policy totally came out from the phase of isolationism to ensure its strategic autonomy to safeguard its sovereign rights and promote national interests within the global scenario. Under the administrations of President Bush and President Obama, United States focused on accommodation of Indian primary national objectives and they also made an acknowledgement regarding their outstanding concerns in this regard. A very unique feature on the basis of which this relation was built was that, US considered himself to be the oldest democracy in world on the other hands India claimed to be the largest democracy on globe. (Ollapally, 2008)

US foreign policy also ensured an increase in bilateral trade & investment with India along with the cooperation on international security matters which included India in decision making on core issues of global governance. US also played an important role in up gradation of Indian representation in trade & investment forums of the world. In 2016, US along with India also became signatory of the “Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement” which made India a major defense partner of the United States. This was a great turn in the US foreign policy since all times which brought two states very close to each other in the global political setup.

Gallup's annual World Affairs conducted a survey and according to its reports India is considered as 6th most favorite nation for US in the whole world as per this report 71% of people from US think of India as a favorite state since 2015.

US relations with India: An Economic Context

US was one of the principal trading partner of India who was receiving some 13% of its total exports from India and was giving a supply of more than 25% of India's total imports. Hence, trade with India was one of the most important portion of total foreign trade of US. It was also a fact that Indian contribution to total US imports came down from 1.2% in the year of 1966 to 0.53% till 1977. So it was important

time for the Indian prime minister to make further improvements in the economic ties between India and US. There were also huge differences between the two states on the issue of naval presence of the major powers in the Indian Ocean. (Hagerty. D.T, 2007)

During the time of Indra Gandhi, India was in strong support for an idea of the Indian Ocean which according to them was a 'Zone of Peace' and it must be free from the rivalries of super powers and their conflicts so India always showed a very strong protest against the establishment of military bases at the place of Diego-Garcia. It was a more clear fact from the statements of Mrs. Gandhi that India was always ready to have cordial and working relations with the US on equal footings.

This was the time for both states, after encouraging signals to understand compulsions and national interests of each other. So, US Vice President George Bush also paid a visit to India in May 1984. This visit paved the routes for the negotiations between two states on high technology Memorandum of Understanding which were delayed only because of internal differences of the Reagan's administration.

Indo-US relations after 9/11 till date

President Bush Junior took his oath for his office in 2001. At that time, South Asia was not the primary concern for US foreign policy agenda because it was assumed that this region had lost its importance to secure US strategic interests after the cold war came to an end. So, as a result of this US began to limit its engagements from the region soon after disintegration of Soviet Union and provided an assurance to whole world that it is the end of cold war. However, various incidents like 1990's crisis between India and Pakistan, overt nuclearization of South Asia in 1998 along with the kargil conflict between Pakistan and India in 1999 were some main incidents which played their role to draw the attention of US foreign policy makers towards this region during this decade. US put some sanctions on India and Pakistan, preceding their nuclear explosions in 1998 and again did same with Pakistan in 1999 when Pervez Musharraf took over the government through the military coup. US also played its role during the kargil issue which was actually an effort to minimize the possibilities of a full scale war between two nuclear states. America was doing all this because she was looking for some long term interests in this region. With a very low status of already set priorities for south Asian region, President Bush started his journey of president ship in United States which claimed herself as sole superpower of that time. It was expected that new administration would continue Clinton's policies for the South Asia which had following main features(Ahmad, E, 2007)

- A tilt towards India to develop better economic relations
- A strong desire to minimize the previous differences and to change her attitude during cold war for better relations with Pakistan
- To ask both states to put some nuclear restraints and also favored to start a peace process in Kashmir.

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The Bush administration had a strong wish to make India as their future strategic partner to maintain stability in this region. Other objectives in this regard were also to fight against the emerging Islamic fundamentalism and to put a check and balance on the China's ambitions in this region both in military as well as economic point of views, were some important priorities. A comprehensive analysis of some early years of President Bush shows that India remained unable to perform as much as United States had a wish for to do, although there was a very strong partnership of US with India.

There came a very certain change in United States' foreign policy after the brutal incident of 9/11 in 2001. When Bush became president, main focus of his policy initiatives was to establish strong "missile shield" on various European areas, in January 2001. The primary purpose of this shield was to provide protection in case North Korea or Iran made their efforts to launch a missile strike against US. In this regard, Condoleezza Rice, the head of "National Security Council", gave a speech regarding their policies with a primary focus on this missile shield on September 11, 2001. After the disastrous incident of 9/11, there came major changes in the foreign policies of US and following issues became their main policy matters.

Bush Foreign Policy after September, 11: A South Asian Perspective

Many scholars are of the view that new century started from the September 11, 2001 instead of 1st January 2001. Some people believe, it was end of the cold war and start of post-cold war era. But it is most common belief that President Bush comments, "9/11 changed America" are based on truth. These attacks also played a pivotal role to transform the roots of regional security for whole South Asian region.

"The attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon turned US' South Asia policy temporarily upside down, bringing Pakistan to center stage and putting parts of the US-India agenda on hold."

9/11 terrorist attacks affected the South Asia more than any other region of the world. After the incident of September 11, US put his efforts to attain following primary objectives in South Asia:

- As short term objectives, US started its efforts to prevent a full scale war between India and Pakistan at one hand and on the other tried to maintain Indian and Pakistani cooperation in its war against terrorism.

- For the medium term, United States also played its role for prevention of Indo- Pakistani conflict which could cause the eruption of a nuclear exchange. It was also the primary objective of US to ensure that nuclear arsenals and its relevant materials in South Asian region must not be grabbed by terrorists or any organization which could become a hurdle in the way of US efforts for the nonproliferation.

- For the long term, US had a strong wish for the permanent solution of Kashmir issue while on the other hand, was also making her attempts to avoid such circumstances which could help in the creation of sanctuaries for militants in this area.

As a good will gesture and as a response to Indian assistance and Pakistan's role throughout war on terrorism, President of US made an announcement to waive sanctions from both of the states and also decided to provide assistance to them. President Bush also made an announcement to issue a final statement and removed all other sanctions which were relevant to nuclear tests against India and Pakistan on September 22, 2001. On 27th of the same month, President also signed an agreement and converted it to make a law which abolished all imposed sanctions officially on Pakistan which were having relevance with democracy and also gave concessions in debt arrears till 2003. Along with the removal of these sanctions, United States extended an amount of 600 million dollars to Pakistan as economic Support. Pakistan also received an estimated amount of 624.5 million dollars as development assistance while India got an amount of 164.3 million dollars as a development aid along with food aid grants.

US issued its National Security Strategy in September 2002 and the government announced that US would “invest time and resources into building strong bilateral relations with India and Pakistan.”

With the same momentum at that time, US also took a notice of “India's potential to become one of the great democratic powers of the twenty-first century”, also said we did hard work for establishment of our relations on basis of bilateral interests of two states. Hence, US made a plan to establish more cordial and well balanced relations in South Asia which included a strong alliance with Pakistan along with well-managed strategic ties with India as well. The strategic partnership between India and Pakistan was actually a goal which two states had established since many years which also had basis on many mutual interests although process of relation building was comparatively slow as compare to the expectations.

Indo-US Foreign Relations: Engagements in Afghanistan

“India has its engagements in the Afghanistan in order to achieve its primary objectives so that she could win sympathies of Afghan people by using various tools like approval of foreign aid to improve overall road infrastructure and other medical facilities. A project was also started for the betterment of various education programs, establishment of power generation networks and some other infrastructure sectors of important nature. India's extensive and exclusive investment has many objectives to ensure settlement of Afghanistan into the regional trade arrangements of South Asia that will increase its economic growth. India also wishes to raise her influence on Pakistan while ensuring his help to the Afghanistan.

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Implications for South Asian Security

Balance of power in South Asia is determined by two important actors, nuclear deterrence and the role of major powers in this region. It is a matter of fact that involvement of United States in South Asia always plays a pivotal role for the maintenance of strategic stability of all states in this region, especially after the nuclear explosions of Pakistan and India. US has also played a very pivotal role for the establishment of the Pakistani defense equipment as well as provided economic assistance to Pakistan. Under such conditions, tilt of United States towards India can be more disastrous, particularly for the security interests of Pakistan and generally for South Asia. This convergence of US interests in accordance with the policies of India will also lead US' policy makers to think of India, more important vis-a-vis Pakistan. Hence, US will give priority to India on political, economic and defense issues which will disturb balance of power in whole South Asia.

To achieve their vested interests, major Powers always make their efforts to search for the different opportunities to maintain their superiority over their enemies through the establishment of hegemonic status in that specific region. United States also has a strong wish to counter China in South Asia. Hence, US justifies its policies for making its foreign policies in favor of India so that strategic relations with largest democratic state of this region could become more cordial.”

Indo-US strategic partnership is a preemptive US policy to maintain unipolar system to stable US hegemony at the global level. But if US supported India according to her strategy to contain China, it will cause serious threat to the South Asian security.

Partnership between India and America are creating visible threats for regional as well as global stability of states because of many known reasons like heavy buildup of armaments by India in South Asia. A post published in Washington Post, dated April 19, 2012, said that the Agni V missiles played an important role to enhance Indian nuclear deterrence up to the very significant level with a much clear aim to establish an organized defense mechanism against China and Pakistan.

The leadership of US always made their efforts to convey such messages to China and especially to Pakistan whenever they visit to South Asian region and also tried to put some threats for bordered states of India by concluding arms accord with the India.

Open support of India by US especially in the field of security has resulted in, an arms race in South Asia which is now accelerating because India is continuously busy in arms buildup in this region. Indian arms stock is not only for its defense but also to counter China and Pakistan's arms technology as a whole. In this regard, there is one most important observation is that India has also started his efforts for the development of laser weapons for military operations to threaten her adjacent states. As per some reports, Indian military is working on deployment of their laser weapons submarines, air force fighters and destroyers along with the transport planes so that it could raise standards of its arms technology.

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As concluded remarks, it could be added that Indian state is among one of those few states on the globe which is still unable to establish cordial relations with any of its neighboring state. Indian support by US in the name of “Indo US Strategic Relationship” is obviously causing some great threats and fears for the regional as well as international peace and it has become a matter of great concern for all peace loving countries in this world. So, US and India must play important role in South Asia by taking following steps

- Territorial disputes like Kashmir, Siachen and Sir Creek should be settled immediately with a special focus on the Kashmir issue which can be a possible nuclear flash point between states of India and Pakistan.
- A role of the various non-state actors as well as violent and extremist groups across the boundary line should be reduced.
- There must be focus on the growing doctrinal imbalance in South Asia and the development of other kinds of provocative strategies for the limited war fighting.
- US also play a special role to decrease the chances of cyber warfare in South Asia.
- A warning should be issued to India for their growing conventional asymmetry and heavy Indian defense budget.

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