

Indo- US Relations in Post Cold War era: From Non-alignment to Engagement

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Abstract

Historically the Indo-US relations can be divided into two main periods of “Non-alignment” – The greater part where the two countries estranged with each other was the period of Cold War, and the India’s independence from the Britisher’s from 1947 to the Indian nuclear test in 1998, and of “engagement” that starts covering during the last period of Bill Clinton’s president-ship. The US President inaugurated a new relationship with India i.e. “Engagement”. He was very much interested to make a visionary future for the strategic partnership. The second who shifts the old hostility between the two countries into a Next Step of Strategic Partnership was George W. Bush during the period of Man Mohan Singh’s government. The paper will make an attempt to examine the Indo- US strategic partnership after from nonalignment to engagement. It will also discuss in detail the benefits of engagement to India and USA and how it may impact on the future bilateral relations of both the countries in the region. It will discuss all the aspects of Indo-US strategic Partnership.

Keywords: Indo-US relations, Post Cold War politics, Non-alignment, Strategic Partnership, Engagement.

Introduction

The model of Non-alignment is India’s gift to international relations. Soon after taking over as interim Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru put forward his guiding principles which came into being into the idea of non-alignment. After the end of Second World War a new conflict emerged between two power blocs called the Cold War. The Cold War used a serious conflict between the two super powers, the United States of America and the Soviet Union. In 1945 at the end of Second World War, the conflict that was boiling within the Allied groups had become instantaneously visible. It was a potent war, a war with lacking of armed forces and weapons, a war of nerve, a war of great efforts of two antagonistic groups to tussle diplomatically.

India and United States are world’s largest democracies. If not allies, the two democracies should be natural friends because of India being the largest democracy and America the oldest and most powerful democracy.¹ But both the countries could not to flourish a political engagement that arose regularly in critical interests as a result of divergence. But, with India’s shift from socialist economy toward market

economy at home and with the replacement of international economic order. In order to develop a strong strategic partnership both states took several initiatives. This strategic partnership is comprised of a broader range of areas for mutual cooperation which includes economic, trade, space, nuclear technology, missile technology, and defense cooperation. Thus, after 9/11, a growing attentiveness of India's strategic potential has led to serious re-evaluation in the United States of its relationship with India. In order to meet the newer challenges of security and trade, and to pursue its core and national interests, the US has changed its policy towards South Asia in post 9/11 period and reshaped its policy to achieve its goals and is re-examining its political, economic, military and strategic partnership with India

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The main motive of the policy of non- alignment was to stay away from power politics and to maintain a good relationship with both the blocs and establishing military alliance with none, and to develop a neutral foreign policy. Nehru had put forward a statement on September 7, 1964 and clearly stated that, "We shall make history of its own choice." He further added: "we propose, as far as possible to keep away from the power politics of groups, aligned against one other which have led in the past two world wars and which may again lead to disaster on even vaster scale." Later, he clearly expressed that India did not try to involve itself with either of the power blocs and also not become the supporter of "anti-superpowers". The USA's approach of containing communism with the help of formation of military alliance did not make ready to seek an endorsement with India. On the other hand, India on her side, decided to make its own foreign policy and clearly asserting India's self-determination would be incomplete without deciding to all its present as well as upcoming issue which comes on its merit.² India clearly declared the main motives of its foreign policy were influenced by historical, domestic, international and personality factors. Nehru affirmed that ' whatever policy we may lay down, the art of conducting the foreign affairs of country lies in finding out what is most advantageous to the country'.³ India repeatedly made it clear that it did not involve the third party to decide its foreign policy and laid emphasis on to build up its own decision making approach. India also showed strongly an unsympathetic approach towards the superpower military alliances. As Nehru observed:

I think that only in the long run, but also in the short run, independence of opinion and independence of action will count... purely from the point of view of opportunism, if you like, straight forward honest policy, an independent policy is the best.

He further stated that:

We are not going to participate in a Cold War which I think, is worse than a shooting war in many ways. A shooting war is, of course, very disastrous but a Cold War is worse in the sense that it is more degrading. It does not matter who is right and who is wrong but we shall certainly not join in this exhibition of mutual abuse.

In this way, the Nehru's desire to lay down its own ideology were there could make a possible to choose its policies, friends according to its own wishes and its ideology, aspirations could not be undermined within the

hands of superpowers. India strongly denounced the intervention of both the superpowers in the domestic and external affairs of the newly emerged African, Asian and Latin American countries. Even before self-determination, during a conference with US Ambassador in July 1947, Nehru made clear his opinion on major policy questions in the words:

India desired to avoid involvement with either of the power blocs, but, at the same time, wished warm relations with the United States; the Soviet Union held attraction for India as an example of how a backward country could develop rapidly but, politically, however, India disliked the undemocratic and totalitarian nature of the Soviet regime; India had concerns that American economic power would in some way impinge on her sovereignty but at the same time, India needed and desired US capital goods to help the country's development; India's economy would probably broad follow the British Socialist model..

The US believed India's policy of non-alignment has come about with a great suspicion and doubts and did not approve the same. Washington's approach that 'those who are not with us are against us' quietly expressed that the non-alignment policy that the India engaged itself did not seek appreciation from US. Though the relationship between the two countries were one of estrangement rather than confrontation, in strategic terms we can say the choice of Pakistan as a partner to combat communism began a hyphenated, zero-sum relationship with India, while Pakistan's image in the eyes of US enhanced and India's image faded away. In Pakistan's alliance with US has also made Nehru very concerned that the Cold War would fly their wings in the region when he was diligently attempting to establish a peace and stability among the newly independent Arab- Asian countries.

India was not ready to accept the USA hegemony and its policy to expand the capitalist imperialism through length and breadth of the world and reject India's role as at best a major nuisance and most terrible detrimental to the United States' good perceptions and national interests. India's support to give self-determination to Indonesian people, its initiative to recognize China as a Republic and its independent foreign policy approach means to raise the voice in favour of independence of colonial countries had very much annoyed the USSenator William F. Knowland who was one of the strongest critics of India's foreign policy of non-alignment, commented that Jawaharlal Nehru-the Prime Minister of India as speaking all the nations of Asia. Thus a state of conflict has come to pass of both the USA and India and India came about in many world debates over the issue of independence of colonial states.

In this way the United States by and large did not pay a heed attention to enlarge a bilateral relationship with India and both the countries come close to each other. In the same period of time, the USA's attitude has come about some modifications but it always gave first preference to attain its own national interest and did not ready to regard India as an equal nation. This country was generally given low priority by the US foreign policy- makers. The US was never ready to appreciate the India's foreign policy approach to international politics and often criticized its non-alignment as pro-Soviet policy. The fluctuating of Indo-US relations a statement was put forward by Stanley Hofmann and had stated that of all countries

India's relations with the United States have been producing apprehension. He had written from the very beginning that, when India got freedom there have been a number of tensions in their relations and they did not allow to both the countries to make a very stronger relationship with each other. In this way we can say, India-US relations have been portrayed as relations of "unfriendly friends".

However, the bipolar world power got fractured in 1990, at the international level with the demise of the Soviet Union and the ensuing of cold war politics. This demise did not only compel the India but also the whole world to reshape and reframe the goals of their foreign policies at the regional, global, and bilateral level and especially towards US, which emerged as a sole surviving superpower in the world. With the Soviet Union disintegration India changed its idealistic approach into a more pragmatic, which was the conformity with the contemporary realities of the world.

End of Cold War, comprehensively without the suspicion and stereotypes of the past have generated new hopes about a fresh start for India and US, and could now talks to each other friendly⁴. India got totally changed after it was assisted with military support, economically and politically by the USA as it was initially assisted by the USSR before its disintegration, USSR was a major threat to USA's interests with developing the relations with India and the other Asian Countries. But after the disintegration of USSR, USA had no obstacle or hindrance with establishing the political, military and Economic relations with India and other Asian Countries. India and some other countries adopted the economic policies and programs of the USA to boast their economic development and advance with science and technology. In this way India and some other Asian countries reshaped their economies and tried to emerge as major economies in the world.

Before the disintegration of USSR, the Asian countries were mostly influenced by the Soviet Union and have great influence in the economic strategy of the Asian countries and were stringent to change the whole economic and political scenario of the Asian and other European countries. But after the disintegration of Soviet Union, USA started to reshape and restructured its economic policy and strategy to establish these in Asian countries as well as European countries in order to reduce the threat of further development and advancement of some superpower nations in the world. USA wanted to keep aside all the super powers and wants to take its own impression and power through length and breadth of the world. During the Cold War era, USA followed the policy of containment of communism all over the world and also maintaining the South-Asian regional balance by strengthening Pakistan against India. But after the end of cold war, USA felt that now it is the time to change her policy towards this region. Due to this policy, Washington seemed unsure of the India's inclusion in the changed global environment and was in state of chaos how could India get ready for adoption of President Bush's "New World Order"⁵. Although the cold war ended but USA neither developed a close ties with India nor gave the central focus of US foreign policy towards India. But the main focus was to get the India and other newly liberated states outside of the

influence of the Soviet Union. The post cold war strategy of US can be highlighted in the world of Richard N. Hass, former special assistant to US President as:

It is important to note that we will do everything possible to resist making our relation with India and Pakistan either/or zero sum proposition....in the modern age it is neither prudent nor possible to have a successful relationship with only one of these two states. We will require good relations with both or we will likely end up with good relations with neither⁶.

The economic crisis and negative (unfavored) balance of payment in 1991 had created the unemployment conditions in India and low economic growth rate. Due to this, India was forced to seek the help of the US to come out of this economic crisis. The economic assistance of USA's helped India to reshape its economic system in order to boost the GDP and to provide the employment opportunities to the people and to develop the infrastructure. With India's economic reform it gave a new shape of both the countries to find a new market and define new global paradigms in a world devoid of classic cold war imperatives⁷. Although, the dismantle of Soviet Union and the USA had to make some changes in her economic model and policies in order to get them accepted by India and other European Countries. Due to these changes the USA's economic policies were quit enough to be introduced by the most countries of the world including India. After the substantive change in economic policies and the performing of joint military exercise in 1992 has expressed the significant signal of improvement in relationship of both the countries. But this was not the end, India had tried to further promote its military and economic relations with the USA to strength her military and economic power and emerge as a major power in the region.

In the post Cold War era, the drastic changes came across the world and the new concept of security has acquired a new dimension, like the economic, social, environmental and humanitarian threats and the most biggest threat that is the order of the day after the post cold war was the regional, ethnic and religious conflict, terrorist strikes, failure of democratic institutions, nuclear nonproliferation⁸ etc. with this havoc disturbances the US had changed its foreign policy approach during the presidency of Bill Clinton and gave the focus on five main planks- multilateral diplomacy, free trade, protection of human rights, checking environment degradation and support for democratic regimes⁹.

The US policy of estrangement towards India has many causes that were responsible for both the countries to fail in establishing a cordial relationship with each other. These are summed up as under.

1.1 The problem of nuclear Non-proliferation

The basic difference where the two countries could not make a cordial relationship to each other was the decision of "India's Nuclear Option" by conducting five nuclear tests. India's clear policy i.e. not to suspend, or terminate, its nuclear Programme had developed a wedge in Indo-US relations and India's decision that it would stop its nuclear policy only if all the Nuclear Weapon States (NWS) would ready for in course of time, to implement the principles that have been mentioned on the agenda of nuclear disarmament.

The US views that the armaments could become the catastrophic threat for the whole mankind, to counter this threat the USA took the bold initiative to establish a nuclear non-proliferation regime. To achieve this purpose, the United States had always wanted to both the countries i.e. India and Pakistan should sign the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). But, India refused this treaty and had criticized on the grounds of discriminatory nature and asserts that the India would not stop its nuclear policy and argued that the three neighborhood countries had already conducted the nuclear tests and therefore would not ready for to sign the non-proliferation treaty (NPT). On the other hand, Pakistan also refused to sign the NPT and made it clear to Bush as well as Clinton that it would sign the treaty (NPT) only after India sign it. By then, the issue of NPT had become the order of the day of every bi-literal and multi-literal forum and also USA gave the much priority on it and has mentioned the principles of this treaty into its core agenda of foreign policy.

1.2 Kashmir the lingering factor of US foreign policy

In the second face of the Cold War the Kashmir has remained an enduring factor for the USA towards India and the South Asian region. Not only this, the US made to an uneasy approach with India and continued her policy of enthusiasm and supplied military, material and moral aid to Pakistan. The estrangement between the USA and India the Kashmir Issue was one of the major problem. India blames Pakistan for provoking the efforts of insurgence by supplying arms and moral support to the Kashmiri insurgents. On 21th April, 1948 the United Nations for India and Pakistan (UNCIP) was setup when the Britain and US adopted a resolution in the Security Council. India got excited about this fact and felt that the United Nations would surely recognize India's affirmation on Kashmir as genuine, but the United Nations announced the entire territory of Kashmir as disputed one. Nehru felt pain and outraged, as the United Nations did not declare Pakistan as the aggressor¹⁰.

In the very beginning, India did not like to involve the third party and had totally opposed the 'Internationalization' of this issue but Pakistan always hatched a plot to pressurize India via Washington, that the Kashmir is disputed territory and plead that the issue should be sorted out through negotiations between the two concerning parties¹¹.

From the forgoing considerations, it can be said that Kashmir remained a heated discussion between Pakistan and India and Pakistan had always remained a factor of the minds of the US policy towards India. In the entire Cold War the US policy on Kashmir issue has been remained a majestic roadmap of USA to managing India, and developed the balance of regional equilibrium with the strengthening of Pakistan.

1.3 The Question of Human Rights

The question of the violation of the human rights was also one of the serious differences between India and America. According to professor Shrivastav the world community "is not very sensitive to any serious violation of human rights". Both Organization like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have

expressed grave attention over serious violation of human rights by Indian security forces¹². according to the U.S State Department of India, India's country report on Human Rights practices for 2001 (March 2002), India continued to be the victim of brutalizing the human rights, and had remained a serious problem these include extra judicial killings, including faked encounter killings ,arbitrary arrests, extensive societal violence against women, incommunicado detentions in Kashmir, excessive use of force by security forces, poor prison conditions, torture and rape by agents of the government, forced prostitution, human trafficking, female infanticide and case based discrimination and violence among others.¹³

In this way the United States urged that the Indian government must take some positive steps in combating the human rights violations including, opening Kashmir to International human rights group and electronic media, releasing political prisoners, allowing the international Red Cross to call on detention centers and prisons etc.

With this unfavorable environment in an international level particularly US foreign policy approach the government of India had established a national Human Rights Commission in 1993 to investigate the human rights violations across the India. The Supreme Court had also played a vital role in combating the custodial excess of the police by playing rigorous requisites on arrest procedures and conceded compensation for police abuses victims. In 1997, the Supreme Court ordered there must be need some reforms of prisoners like overcrowding, torture, and neglect of health and hygiene etc.¹⁴. With these above facts on the issue of human rights was distressing the US policy toward India in the early 1990s.

Transformation from Estrangement to Engagement

But both the countries could not to flourish a political engagement that arose regularly in critical interests as a result of divergence. But, with India's shift from socialist economy toward market economy at home and with the replacement of international economic order. The traditional communality of values is now completed by a strongest set of intersociety ties based on growing Indo- US economic trade connectivity, the active exchange of Indian and American ideas, the American's of Indian origins role in US political life and with the help of movies, food, literature and travel, both the countries had shared their culture to each other. These connecting structures had to strengthen the dramatic convergence of national interests between the United States and India in a manner never evidenced during the Cold War¹⁵. In this regard, "America proposes to encourage the advancement of democracy and economic openness in both the nations because they are the best foundation for domestic stability and international order"¹⁶.

In dealing with regional stability and the USA's national interest in Asia, USA recognized India's potential to emerge as a strongest and pre-eminent economic and military 'super power' in South Asia with a similar interest in maintaining a peace in the region. It also claims India could act as the security manager in the region, but largely in a kind and generous fashion¹⁷.

With the end of Cold War and the India's economic reform, the USA's foreign policy had given the top priority to the India¹⁸. The India's decision of market based economy could open up enormous benefits

for India and for US¹⁹. The economic reform, constituted by Prime Minister Rao, has created a good opportunity for USA companies to interact with their Indian counterparts beyond the boundaries; it will create new jobs to both the countries and provide very large market overseas.²⁰

Americans have reassessed India's economic market and overall progress and have generally concluded that if both the countries flourish a business over the long term, then the relationship of both the countries will be important. To stay in business competition India could fulfill the three basic needs to USA: Firstly, to sustain American creativeness India is supplying the United States with significant brain power²¹. India is a democratic and multi-cultural country, in USA's economy Indian brain power has already proven its contribution in research and development are flourishing more and more companies in India to slash costs on research and development.

Secondly, India has a good ability to offer exclusive economic possibilities to slash cost throughout sourcing and supplying a large market itself.

Thirdly, with its accelerating middle class and an emerging market could provide the US an opportunity to secure market for its consumer products besides China.

From the Indian point of view²², the turning point of a number of self- sustained developments has conjoined to create the climate facilitative for a transformed relationship with the United States ties,

- The collapse of Soviet Union, end of Cold War, new power relationship, and coherent redesign of interstate ties,
- Reconceiving the relationship and negotiating contemporary challenges and opportunities.
- Global threats that havoc the nation- states like terrorism, weapons of mass destruction acceleration, pandemics and natural disaster, thus necessitated the states to cooperate with each other.
- Interdependence of nation- states, economic reform and a global economic integration.

Finally, the world's democracies come close to each other and became the part and parcel ingredient of the new world order²³.

The two countries forwarded a common goal and a mutual vision to strengthen their bilateral relationship.

The first mile stone in Indo-US relations can be described when the President Bill Clinton visited India in March 2000. This was very important because after 22 years the US President visited to India²⁴ and characterized a pre-eminent change in US policy. "Whether it was a consequences of a tacit acknowledged by the US of India's 'Unofficial' nuclear status, its economic reforms, its acceptances as a pre-eminent regional power and a source of stability in the Indian Ocean region, or a reflection of a changed mind set of decision makers on both sides in a Post-Cold War environment²⁵." An Indian expert has analyzed, "the fact remains that these developments could not have been foreseen by an observer in 1998." Further, the USA expressed positive approach towards India and expressed grave concern to end the hostility in differences on the nuclear issue wherein the entire relationship was not made mutual to both the world's largest democracies. By Clinton's five day visit in India had clearly expressed that its priority within South Asia

would be India and become the major partner in the region. While President Clinton said during his visit, “As I look at the world of tomorrow-a-world I hope will be characterized by peace and prosperity, by a genuine commitment to the dignity of all people; by societies which celebrate their ethnic, their racial, their tribal religious diversity, but are bound together by a common acceptance that the humanity we all share is even more important than the differences among US- I know the world will never be that way unless South Asia is that way²⁶”.

The Bush President recognized the role of India in South Asia in achieving of the two important goals of his Presidency: “the war on terrorism” and the advancing of democracy. Correspondingly, by the main political units in both the capitals to their intimate partnership became an important target both for the USA and for the India²⁷. The nature of this mutual partnership was totally changed in those eight years and a pre-eminent outcome was made in the critical fields of energy, security and the economy. The world’s most powerful and largest democracies ultimately seemed to go hand in hand and to become a major partner in the New World Order²⁸. Developing mutual relationship and a common vision, both the countries were laid out the major scrupulous actions to strengthened their mutual relationship like, global democracy initiative, HIV/AIDS partnership, US- India Energy Dialogue, Revitalized US- India Agricultural Alliance, US- India Disaster Response, counter- terrorism, nuclear deal, climate change, international trade etc. Their mutual understanding to these programs signaled that the India and United States have got succeed to make their bilateral relationship very stronger.²⁹

Conclusion

India’s vital position in South Asia, its strategic position between Western Asia and Southeast Asia and its appearance as an economic power give it an influential place in global politics. The Indo-US partnership has been the logical conclusion of a vision for US-India relations as framed by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh. The US has helped India reach the high-table, but how India makes use of this and shapes the architecture is up to New Delhi. To date India and United States have become the greater beneficiary friends and jointly have initiated many agreements which took their relations in great zenith. To make this relationship more stronger India will need to go hand in hand with US policies to solve the problems in its region and global. This means to involve itself and trying to adopt a more active international role and applying its own potential to such tasks as active contribution to promoting democracy and to resolving the Iranian nuclear program crisis, or embarking on military cooperation with the US in stabilization and peacekeeping missions, including in Afghanistan and in the Indian Ocean. India may not remain the defensive, reactive or self-seeking party; on the contrary, it will have to reinforce the pro-active, creative and compromise-oriented approach. Without this change on the Indian side, the “strategic global partnership” will remain merely a paper commitment.

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