



INDIA- US RELATIONS IN POST COLD WAR PERIOD

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Abstract

When we analyze Indo-US relations, there have been ups and downs in Indo-US relations. It seems geopolitics has played a crucial part in it. During Cold War India opted for Non-Alignment and chose not to join either of the blocs; the liberal bloc led by US and the Communist bloc led by USSR. However, it has been generally accepted that India's foreign policy tilted more towards USSR. The US initially was either skeptical or didn't give much importance to India as a regional power, or a potential ally. However, a certain sequence of events like that of Soviet disintegration, 9/11, the war on terror and the rise of China changed the pattern of world politics. New alliances began to be forged. One such unexpected alliance was between India and US. The financial crisis of 1991 and the disintegration of Soviet contributed to India-US proximity in the post-Cold War era. The fall of Soviet Union and the emergence of New World Order forced Indian policymakers to reshape their foreign policy. Since then the relations were normal till 1998 when India tested Pokhran ii, Like Pokhran-I test, Pokhran-II also received a storm of reactions, the US was the first country to react, expressing strong condemnation and imposed numerous sanctions which results in deterioration of relations between the two. After the attack of World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, India responded quickly. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee decided to offer its full support for the US to fight against terrorism. After forming anti-terror campaign with US, in 2005, India and US moved towards the nuclear deal, the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Bill which was proposed in 2005 was signed into law by President Bush in December 2008.

Keywords: India, US, Cold war, 9/11, Nuclear deal.

Introduction

After the disintegration of former USSR, India underwent a severe economic crunch. Due to unsustainable borrowing and high expenditure in the year 1990-91, the GDP growth rate went down from 6.5 percent to 5.5 percent in 1990-91, the average rate of inflation went up to 10 percent from 7.5 percent in 1991-92 further escalating to 13 percent. The average industrial growth rate was 8 percent in the second half of 1980s. In 1989-90, it was 8.6 percent and in 1990-91 it was 8.2 percent. Significant trends in international relations unfolded post 1991 that might provide favorable circumstances for closer relations between the US and India.¹

India has at least 150 million middle class which provides a big market. According to US, India is in the midst of a major and rapid economic expansion with an economy projected soon to be the world's third largest. Since mid-1990, India was living under the shadow of a large external debt in hard currency that had transformed the economic scenario beyond recognition. Despite serious poverty prevailing in India, the US Government believes that the long term economic potential of India is tremendous and the recent development in the technology sector has brought international attention to such new global high-tech Centers as Bangalore and Hyderabad. US interests in South Asia were complex and diversified during Cold War, India- US relations for most of the 1990s focused mainly on market economy. Under the Narsimha Rao Government, the 1992 liberalization of Indian economy,



some of the top US business houses were directly approached by the Indian government for investing in the country.ⁱⁱ

The US on the invitation of Indian Government showed interests in investment, Washington was investing in the core sectors of the economy like power, electronics, hydrocarbons, computers and development of natural resources. The US investments and economic interactions had been on an ascending curve.ⁱⁱⁱ The course of Indian economy radically changed with the adoption of 1991 economic reforms leading to better growth rate, high investment and trade flows and accelerated decline in income poverty. With these reforms, there had been deep effects on India's trade and investment relations with the US.^{iv} There was no doubt that US interests were invoked by India's liberal economic policy and its vast market. Between the US need of Indian market and India's dependence on the US to accelerate the pace of its economic growth, there was perfect convergence of interests. Experts believed that by helping both India and Pakistan to develop "normal" bilateral relations with one another, US interest would be better served. Regular, sustained and multifaceted contact between India and the US in a wide variety of trade area should be encouraged by the US and other interested governments and organizations.^v

Since the early 1990s, when Washington threatened to impose sanctions in retaliation against New Delhi's restrictive trade policies, India and the US have come a long way. The policy challenge over the medium term is to see that economic relations continue to expand. After the end of the cold war, in the economic area, US has shown more understanding of India's enormous problems and poverty, especially in relation to trade policy questions.^{vi} Expanded commercial and economic ties, however, largely lie in Indian hands. Unless the Indian government vigorously carries through with its reforms, genuinely modifying India's economic policies to open the country to the rest of the world and to give greater scope for market forces, US business is unlikely to show much greater interest in India than it has in the past.

Impact of Globalization on India-US Relations

Globalization played an important role in bringing India and US together. Globalization is often described a process by which the US extends its economic and cultural influence globally. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, US leaders saw the strength at their disposal as an opportunity to mold the international environment. The US policy-makers have sought to persuade as many countries as possible to embrace their particular vision of a liberal-capitalist world order. As India was going through a very tough phase during early 1990's, US saw this opportunity to persuade India to follow globalization. As a matter of fact thus interests were invoked by India's liberal economic policy and its vast market. On the other hand India after the disintegration of USSR began to review its foreign policy in a uni-polar world and took steps to develop close strategic ties with the US and West and both the nations initiated defense cooperation due to common security interests and challenges. It is considered that at the end of Cold War in 1990's India-US relations started to improve. After the disintegration of USSR, India adopted new economic policy known as LPG (Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization) in 1991. These steps were welcomed by the US and other developed countries and they started to invest in India. Between the US need of Indian market and India's dependence on the US to accelerate the pace of its economic growth, there was perfect convergence of interests. India because of its sizable population and growing middle and higher income class becomes a potentially large market for US good and services. Exports and imports rose from 13.3 percent of GDP in 1990-91 to 21.8 percent a decade later.^{vii}



After the introduction of reforms, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) started pouring in less than three years from US, Great Britain, Japan, France and Germany. Mutual funds, investment banks, securities firms and commercial banks increasingly invested in Indian securities. Indian companies raised funds in the world capital markets and began merging with each other as well as with foreign competitors. The reforms led to a meaningful shift in the growth rate of GDP after 1993, rising at unprecedented rates of 6-7%, and then averaging 8.4% in the four years 2003-2007, peaking at the 9% range in 2007. This new growth was largely domestic demand-led, driven by consumption and continuing high level of savings and investment unlike growth in the 1980s, which was fueled by excessive borrowing at home and abroad. Gross Domestic Investment (GDI) rates rose from 24.3% of GDP in 2000-01 to 33.8% in 2005-06 and domestic savings from 23.7% in 2000-01 to 32.4% during 2005-06. Over this period, the fiscal management of the country improved with the combined fiscal deficit of the Union and States declining from 9.5% of GDP in 2000-01 to 6.4% in 2006-07. However, combined public debt as a proportion of GDP remained high at over 70%.^{viii} Internationally, India came to be ranked the fourth largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity, and current growth rates could well overtake Japan as the third most significant economic power within 10 years.^{ix}

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India withdrew from 'anti-western' political impulses that were so pre-dominant in its world view that shaped Indian diplomacy and foreign policy. New Delhi became more committed to Western political values outside the Euro-Atlantic world in sharp contrast to its earlier stand when NAM was at its peak during Cold War years. The sudden disintegration of the USSR and the coincidental rise of China as great powers were the reasons India broke the decade old anti-western approach to foreign policy. In this connection, New Delhi's relations with major powers underwent radical transformation. India with traditional partners like Russia on the one hand and the major powers like US, China, Japan and West Europe on the other started maintaining a fine balance (till date) in its relations. The improvement in its relations with China since early 1990s, despite several irritants made China as India's single largest trading partner. India had also put in strong efforts to find political solutions with Pakistan during the tenure of Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1999-2004), though with no positive outcome.

Comfortable Relations with US

In mid-1990s, with India's economic reforms, its growing success and a sense in the US that it needed to cultivate new friends; the India-US relations entered a new phase. While on the one hand, the vast potential of India's growing market became clear business interests to US, on the other, India's growing openness, democratic setup and increasing international credibility commended it as a more important partner for the US. The disintegration of USSR forced India to think of a new diplomatic and strategic partner because USSR was no longer able to provide India the necessary military and diplomatic support. India's foreign policy makers realized that its closer relations with US could help them fill the power vacuum of USSR and also balance against rising Chinese power in South Asian region.^x

The end of Cold War helped India and US move closer together for the simple reason that it was only the Cold War that was a hurdle between India and US prospects of a good relation. Besides the economic and political reasons, India also had military-strategic reasons to cooperate with the US. In January 1992, the first meeting of joint India-US Army council took place in New Delhi between the Indian Army and the US Army.^{xi} The diplomatic relations after the visit of the Indian Prime Minister



Narasimha Rao to the US in May 1994 took place for the upward march towards the beginning of a new phase in India-US Relations. It marked the commencement of a new phase in US-India relations. In the middle of January 1995, Defense Secretary William Perry visited India and concluded a defense agreement with his Indian counterpart and established a 'Defense Policy Forum, to reconsider the strategic interests of both the countries and increase the opportunities of training and joint exercises. This landmark agreement on military cooperation was a breakthrough in India- US relations.^{xii} Although India believed in disarmament, nuclear peace and controlling arms race but it did not disclose its ambitions to possess 'nuclear deterrence' in South Asia because this idea was determined and guided by China and Pakistan postures.

The diplomatic ties between India and the US further boosted with the coming together of Indian Prime Minister I.K. Gujral and President Clinton in New York on September 23, 1997 at the annual session of the UN General Assembly where both the leaders agreed to resume the debate on nuclear proliferation and disarmament that had been held up for about three years. The Bush administration 2001 continued the same trait, moreover President Bush looked up India not only as stabilizing factor but also a force in shaping the new global balance of power.

Pokhran-II and India-US relations

“There is no doubt that India is nuclear nation. It is not a conferment we seek; nor a status for others to grant. It is India's due, the right of one-sixth of human kind”.^{xiii} India finally exercised its five nuclear tests: three tests were conducted on May 11 and two tests on May 13, 1998 in Pokhran, Rajasthan. The May 1998 nuclear tests signaled a dramatic shift in India's nuclear stand. It brought India's nuclear capability from the realm of a calm and covert military program to a publicly known status.^{xiv} India's decision to go nuclear was status driven and similar to the cases of the United Kingdom, France and the US.^{xv} India's series of nuclear tests was not the overall result of Chinese nuclear capabilities but it was BJP that had been declaring since 1960's, that coming into power they would turn India into a nuclear power and got success in March 1998 when BJP achieved power.^{xvi} Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam was the leading architect of India's ballistic missile program and development of nuclear weapons.

India for the second time, at the same Pokhran test site in the Thar desert of Rajasthan, conducted a series of nuclear tests in May 1998, breaking twenty four years of self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing ever since its Pokhran-1 nuclear test in 1974.^{xvii} These Pokhran-II nuclear tests were conducted in two phases. In the first phase, on 11 May 1998, three nuclear tests were carried out. In the second phase, on 13 May 1998, in continuation of the planned program of underground nuclear tests, two more sub-kiloton nuclear tests were carried out at Pokhran range. The second phase of the tests was carried out to generate additional data for improved computer simulation of designs and for attaining the capability to carry out sub-critical experiments, if considered necessary.^{xviii} These tests named "Shakti 98" and coded "Buddha smiled" from the day of Buddha Purnima celebrations, were "contained explosions" like Pokhran-I nuclear tests conducted in 1974.^{xix} The Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee publicly celebrated the role of the scientists who designed the weapons and conducted the explosions, raising science to the level of hitherto reserved for those who protect the nation and feed its citizens and the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) enjoyed this technological 'feat'.^{xx} These tests were developed as a complex linkage between the greatness of India and the nuclear question. Indians worship science, particularly nuclear science. The flattery of scientists is widespread among the Indian strategic elite^{xxiv} and this elite group or lobby comprises roughly active and retired bureaucrats,



diplomats, senior armed forces personnel, as well as politicians, policy-oriented journalists and academics.^{xxi}

Indian Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, in his letter to the US President, Bill Clinton, explained the rationale behind the tests in the same evening. It was obvious that he indirectly pointed at the two neighboring countries, the China and archrival Pakistan as a threat to India's national security. In his letter, he wrote that threat was posed by China with its overt nuclear weapons on its borders. However, both at home and abroad, there arose criticism in justifying China as a threat to India. As a result, the government altered its claim on China threat and assumed officially that it was actually transfer of nuclear and missile technology from China to Pakistan that assisted India to go nuclear.^{xxii} According to K. Subrahmanyam, "India's nuclear capability is a stabilizing and balancing factor in a dangerous situation created by the fallout of cold war and proliferation permissiveness of major Nuclear Weapons powers".^{xxiii}

After India and Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, some US analysts stressed the need to allow limited technical support to both countries to ensure both the security of their nuclear facilities and the non-proliferation of weapons from South Asia.^{xxiv} The US failed to detect the tests and was angered by the Indian disinformation program. A number of sanctions were imposed by the US on India which were lifted by late 2000. Other countries especially Japan, Australia and Canada also put sanctions on India by 2000. India's claim of China being a threat to India and China being the reason of India to go nuclear upset China. On May 28 and 30, 1998, in competition with New Delhi, Pakistan responded with six nuclear weapon tests and Islamabad continued its highly publicized missile testing.^{xxv} Some countries, for example the US, Canada, and Japan imposed economic sanctions against India. As a sign of their displeasure, few countries like Canada and Australia also imposed a ban on ministerial-level talks with India. Others, especially the US, France, Russia, and the UK sought diplomatic engagement with India based on two parameters: non-proliferation and Indian security.^{xxvi}

9/11 and India US relations

September 11, 2001 has a huge importance in the history of international political and security relations that changed the world order. After September 11, 2001, South Asia became an arena for the "war on terrorism" as declared by President George W. Bush which helped Washington to advance and reshape the relations and establish "strategic partnership" with India. After the attack of World Trade Centre on September 11, 2001, India responded quickly. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee decided to offer its full support for the US to fight against terrorism. After September 11, 2001, the government of India communicated to the US mission in New Delhi that it would extend whatever support the US wanted, including military bases, in its global war against terrorism. Prime Minister Vajpayee in his letter to the US President written in October 2001 said that, "*India joined wholeheartedly with the US in its goal for the destruction and defeat of the global terror network which you eloquently announced in your address to the Congress. With you we condemned any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism*".^{xxvii} In response to India's quick support, Colin L. Powell, the then Secretary of State said that, "*With the strong support we have received from the Indian government since 11 September, we are seizing the opportunity to accelerate the pace of change*".^{xxviii}

Both India and the US have been victims of terrorism, the two sides agreed to add a new emphasis in their defense cooperation on counterterrorism initiatives, including expanding mutual support in this area. The two sides also recognized the importance of joint counter-proliferation efforts to achieve the



goals of their defense cooperation. The September 11, 2001 attack and the war on terrorism that followed the tragic event provided a chance for the US and India to forge an even closer strategic cooperation. It has become a turning point in the India-US security relationship. The two countries together -implemented a co-operative framework of relationships based on three dimensions: democracy, economy, and security. As Stephen Cohen, the US specialist on South Asia security issues has commented, the US and India's relationship was structurally changing.

Plans for Nuclear Civilian Pact as step to strategic Partnership

After forming anti-terror campaign with US, India and US moved towards the nuclear deal. The India-US civilian nuclear agreement is the name commonly attributed to a bilateral agreement on nuclear cooperation between the US and the Republic of India. The framework for this agreement was a Joint Statement by Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and US President George W. Bush, under which India agreed to separate its civil and military nuclear facilities and place civil facilities under International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and, in exchange, the US agreed to work toward full civil nuclear cooperation with India.^{xxix} It is meaningful to evoke the history of chaotic bilateral relations between the two nations in order to understand the background of the Nuclear Cooperation. In 2003, the Bush administration not only revived the suspended nuclear safety cooperation with India, but also extended it to the greater possible extent within the sphere of the US domestic laws and international commitments toward non-proliferation. Under the Presidency of Bush, the US starts giving much importance to India and actively sought to make India a strategic partner. For the first time, the India-US Defense Policy Group met and outlined a strategic partnership and commenced implementation of the same, which included joint training and procurement of some more defense related equipment. This subsequently led to an agreement between India and the US on 'Next Steps in the Strategic partnership' (NSSP) in 2004.

The 2005 joint statement was examined at different levels by experts, think-tanks, politicians and commentators of media. It manifested the commencement of the next phase of strategic partnership entailing intensified cooperation on essential areas, including nuclear energy and 'international efforts to prevent WMD proliferation'. From the political point of view, the agreement had the most vital and extensive impacts. It established Indian relationship to the US with new interests. India got recognized as a de-facto nuclear power and there was prospect of American favour for becoming a global power and permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. The joint statement separate almost three decades old technological sanctions and provided multifaceted assistance of influential economy of the world. It also provided energy options in nuclear area and made it a feasible resource for Indian growing economy. More importantly, the deal turned to be a huge global power for India being partner of the US, especially in ensuring India's safety measures in an unstable neighbourhood.

BJP opposed the civil nuclear cooperation by claiming that the terms of the deal compromise: national security issues, autonomy of India's decision-making processes, the autonomy and independence of our nuclear programmes, the inviolability of the principle of a minimum credible deterrent plus, the future of our scientific and technological research in the nuclear field. In particular, the 123 Agreement, indirectly endorsing the Hyde Act of 2006, has formed the basis of BJP concern, since the provisions of the Act hinder India's sovereignty - in particular, in regard to the manner of our foreign policy. When enforced, they will deadly spoil our nuclear weapons programme, and thereby endanger our strategic objectives. The leftists, which were part of the ruling coalition in India, registered a huge criticism against the government for not taking them into consideration before signaling the nuclear deal with the



US. They strongly criticized the government for letting loose on India's long-held strategy of nuclear disarmament.^{xxx}

After opposition from the opposition parties in India, on 18 July 2005, the US and India signed a landmark strategic agreement during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's meeting with President George W. Bush in Washington, D.C. President Bush declared India as a "responsible state with advanced nuclear technology" and signaled US acceptance of India's status as a *de facto* nuclear weapons state outside the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT).^{xxxii} The US-India Civil Nuclear Deal is also seen as the most significant development while giving indirect formal recognition to India's nuclear weapons status and a possible opening up of opportunities for it to become a global player in the field of nuclear energy. After the separation plan was agreed upon, the Hyde Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush in December 2006. The Hyde Act considered the parent act of the 123 Agreement provides the legal basis for nuclear trade between India and the US, since India is not party to the Non Proliferation Treaty.

Based on the July 2005 joint declaration, during President Bush's March 2006 visit to India, the two sides finalized a plan for the separation of Indian civilian and military facilities. They also mutually agreed to limit the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technologies and 'support the conclusion of Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty'. On the fulfillment of the conditions by India, the 123 agreement was introduced in the US Congress and was passed with an overwhelming majority in both the House of Representatives and the Senate. Finally, the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Bill was signed into law by President Bush in December 2008.^{xxxiii} Finally all these efforts from Indian side to be spearheading in Nuclear regime got successful. It is a Nuclear Civilian Pact which is not only for defense purposes but establishing industries for electricity generation leading to give employment to Indian civilians. However India-US collaboration in strategic arena is a hallmark in South Asia. The reaction and responses are part of any development.

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