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INDO-US RELATION: A SHIFT FROM HOSTILITY TO MUTUAL COOPERATION

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to explore the new horizon of Indo-US relationship in the 21st century. The paper is constructed with the help of reviewing a glossary of literature. The paper highlights the nature of Indo-US relations right from the time of Indian independence down to the present day. Though both the countries share identical political culture and common values, their relationship has been characterized more by mistrust and resentment than by cooperation. As the US generally views the world politics with the aid of ideological prism, India's policy of nonalignment has not been translated by the US as truly neutral because of its friendship with the erstwhile Soviet Union. India's "non-aligned" foreign policy and pro- Soviet activities, thus, became a source of considerable irritation to the U.S. Not only did the Indians refuse to assist the U.S. in containing Soviet power, but they also actively cooperated with the Soviet Union in significant ways. In the end, India was not useful in achieving America's grand strategic goals and, in fact, was perceived as actually helping the Soviets to undermine them. Any strategic interest that the U.S. perceived in South Asia lay primarily with India's arch-rival, Pakistan. Pakistan, at least notionally, supported American grand strategic goals including participating in anti-communist military alliances such as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO). But present day scenario is totally different. Both the countries have understood the present day reality and have redefined their partnership in new vision.

Keywords: Anti-Communism, Containment, Cooperation, Horizon, Ideological prism, Mistrust, Nonalignment, Neutral, Partnership, Strategic interest.

INTRODUCTION

A student of international relations intending to sketch the historiography of Indo-US relations undoubtedly came across an interesting episode on the subject for many reasons. The entire history of Indo-US relations is not an easy narrative, but full of confusion and contradiction. More than a period of sixty years apart, both the oldest democracy and the largest democracy in the world failed to understand each other's character and compulsion. Both the nations failed to make out the importance of a friendly atmosphere, but in turn, preferred to follow a zigzag way with a vow to pursue their own national interest. During its early years, Indian republic mapped the world affairs with the prism of an anti-imperialist orientation. The Americans, on the other hand, viewed the world with the prism of anti-communism. Containment of communism became the

major concern of the US foreign policy and the US determined its relations with the world accordingly. This thinking produced the maxim of John Foster Dulles, "Those who are not with us are against us" (Appadorai & Rajan, 1985). India adopted an idealistic yet functionally pragmatic philosophy of nonalignment as the cornerstone of its foreign policy. Amidst the atmosphere of the 1950s, the US viewed India's nonalignment as a cover for interests that diverged from its own. As the Cold War gained momentum, America's frustrations with Indian nonalignment mounted. In the absence of cooperation from India, and with a communist government in China, Pakistan became an essential element in the United States' containment of the Soviet Union in Asia. Ideological gulf between India and the United States thus developed into strategic chasm (David & Mukherjee, 2009). Indo-Chinese war issue in 1962 on boarder compelled Nehru to seek assistance from the western world. The American response in that case was warm yet strategically motivated. It prevailed

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on Pakistan for an assurance that it would not invade Kashmir so that India could redeploy its northern troops towards the front with China. An American carrier - the Enterprise - was dispatched towards the Bay of Bengal. In 1965, when Pakistan contravened a written assurance from President Eisenhower to Nehru that US-supplied weapons would not be used by Pakistan against India, Washington adopted a position of strict neutrality, alienating India and driving Pakistan towards China for military sustenance. The expanding Sino-Pakistani relationship did not, however, prompt a change in India-US relations. In 1971, the East Pakistan crisis coincided with American attempts at building a rapprochement with China, which was facilitated largely by Pakistan. Faced with America's tacit support for Pakistan, India officially turned to the Soviet Union for assistance (David & Mukherjee, 2009). Indo-Soviet friendship ushered a new era of distrust and discomfort between India and the United States that resultantly prompted United States to support Pakistan instead of supporting India, the largest democracy in the world.

EARLY PHASES OF INDO-US RELATIONS

But history reveals that both the countries had long mutual contacts through various agencies such as missionaries, tourists, intellectuals and freedom fighters. Information about India was first transmitted to the Americans through missionary activities. They came to India to cherish religious activities through the introduction of schools through which they distributed literature. They worked among the poor. They did a lot of humanitarian work during the famines of 1897 and 1899 (Gupta, 1969). In the mid-nineteenth century, some American writers started appreciating India's cultural heritage. To quote Stephen N. Hay: "The writings of Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman and of the Sanskritists Hopkins, Lanman and Whitney, helped instill in 19th century Americans a respect for India's cultural heritage" (Hay, 1962). Gandhi and Nehru were deeply influenced by Emerson and Thoreau. In 1883 the Brahma Samaj leader P.C. Majumdar lectured in many American cities, and in 1893 both he and famous Swami Vivekanand earned the applause of the World Parliament of Religions in Chicago, and were eagerly heard by many smaller groups interested in Indian religious thought (Hay, 1962). Vivekanand's opening words, "Sisters and Brothers of America," brought him loud applause. Harvard University offered him the chair of Oriental Philosophy, and the University of Columbia

the chair of Sanskrit. Of India's political leaders, Lala Lajpat Rai was the first to visit the United States. In 1905 he went there in order to tell the American people about the need for Indian Independence. The United States of America: A Hindu's Impression – a book written by him was published in America in 1916. He was much influenced by American life and American democratic institutions. He felt that the Indian student could learn a lot from the United States: "American conditions of life-physical, social and political, are such as to afford him more practical lessons for their application to life in India (Rai, 1916)." Rabindranath Tagore visited the United States in 1912-13, 1916-17, 1920-21 and in 1930. During his stay in the United States, he left everlasting images of Indian life, literature and culture in that country. Stephen N. Hay observes, "On his part, Tagore carried back with him to India many ideas and impressions from the United States, and consistently advocated closer relationships between the Eastern most and Western most branches of the Indo-European family (Rai, 1916)." In 1906, some Indian political exiles landed in the United States. In 1913, a group of Indian patriots, in the leadership of Lala Hardayal, formed the Hindustan Ghadar Party at California to gain the United States' support. They started a weekly, called Ghadar. The best-known Indian after Lajpat Rai to promote the cause of Indian freedom was Taraknath Das. He was the second man to become a U.S. citizen (1914), the first being Akshay Kr. Majumdar (David and Mukherjee, 2009). Among the important figures of America who sympathized with the Indian cause were William Jennings Bryan, subsequently Secretary of State in President Wilson's Cabinet; Rev. John Haynes Holmes, American evangelist and friend of Mahatma Gandhi. Outstanding among India's friends in the U.S. House of Representatives was Henry H. Mason. Some other eminent Americans were Mr. Checker (founder president of the India League of America), Justice William O. Douglas, Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, Senator M. Philip Randolph, Albert Einstein, Congressman, Celler of New York, Congressman James Fulton of Pennsylvania, Pearl Buck and her husband Richard Walsh, and others (David & Mukherjee, 2009). But Mahatma Gandhi's emphasis on non-violence and his unique method of fighting British rule through Satyagraha attracted attention of the American people. The American press also showed a sympathetic attitude towards India's freedom struggle. Among them were the

New York Times, Baltimore Sun, Cleveland Plain Dealer, Philadelphia Inquirer, One World and Christian Science Monitor. During the Civil Disobedience movement, the New York Times reported the speech of Professor L.P. Rushbrook Williams: "An English audience was told today that anti-British and pro-Indian feelings were far more prevalent in the United States today than pro-British opinion in connection with the present upheaval in India (Sing, 1930). Louis Fischer, a prominent journalist, did great service to India by his journalistic writings. He carried the message of Gandhiji to Roosevelt. The Second World War marked the beginning of Indo-US official relations. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Americans realized the need for India's co-operation in the war effort. The strategic importance of India as a base of operations against Japan was one of the chief factors which forced the Roosevelt Administration to take interest in the Indian political problem. In the summer of 1941, the US Government agreed with India and Britain for the exchange of diplomatic personnel. In October 1941, Thomas H. Wilson was appointed the first US Commissioner in New Delhi. Sir Girja Shanker Bajpai was appointed India's Agent General in Washington. He was to act under the overall supervision of the British Embassy. These happenings marked the official relations between India and US.

COLD WAR AND INDO-US RELATIONS

Indo-US relations, as it is mentioned earlier, followed a zigzag way and, thus, had not been so cordial, particularly starting from the World War II to the end of Cold War. Indo-American relations received a serious blow immediately following its independence in 1947 because the US policy regarding Indo-Pak disputes over Kashmir was unfavorable to the Indian interest. India engaged in extensive dialogue with Britain and other members of the Security Council. But despite periods of intense fighting and bouts of flurried diplomatic activity, the territorial balance over which the ongoing bone of contention arose remained roughly the same, with India controlling about two-thirds of Kashmir and Pakistan holding one-third of the region. The war eventually ended with a US sponsored ceasefire on 1 January, 1949 (Bose, 2003). Notwithstanding that many US administrators did consider India as an important front in the Cold War contest and the US gave substantial economic assistance particularly when American ties with China deteriorated. During the 1962 Sino-Indian

war, the US publicly supported India's interpretation of its border with China in the eastern Himalayas and even ferried military equipment to India (Hoffman, 1990). Despite India's potential importance and occasional periods of Indo-US cooperation, however, India would not become trustworthy to the United States. From the US perspective, the main problem of India's foreign policy was that of its "Nonalignment", in practice, that was not translated into real neutrality. In short, India tilted away from the US and more into the Soviet ambit particularly after the signing of Indo-Soviet Agreement in 1971. India's affinity for the Soviet Union was rooted both in subjective preferences and objective strategic factors. At the preferential level, Indians admired the Soviet Union's economic success. This also appealed to the socialist proclivities of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and subsequent generation of Indian elites, who deeply distrusted American style of free market capitalism. In addition, Indians believed that the Soviet Union would not become a colonial power in the future because it lacked a colonial history; it would not seek to expand its territory or influence at Indian's expense (Cohen & Ganguly, 2003-04). Strategically, Soviet Union continued to give support to India on various adverse situations. In 1971, New Delhi and Moscow entered into a phase of 'peace, friendship, and cooperation' after signing a treaty under which the two parties promised to aid one another to avert any military threat. In this way India tried to protect it against the People's Republic of China with which it had fought a bloody border war in 1962 and had an ongoing territorial dispute (Horn, 1982). During the early 1970s China tried to improve its relations with the US, further triggering the perception that Beijing was a potential threat to India. In all these cases, Soviet Union responded favorably to India providing sophisticated arms and taking supportive course of actions for India in the UN Security Council particularly over the Kashmir issue. India, in turn, began to act favoring the Soviet Union on various international issues of highly controversial character even not criticizing Soviet presence in Afghanistan in 1979 as it had done in case of Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956 and Czechoslovakia in 1968 (Ganguly, 2003). India's "non-aligned" foreign policy and pro-Soviet activities, thus, became a source of considerable irritation to the US not only did the Indians refuse to assist the US in containing Soviet power, but they also actively cooperated with the Soviet Union in significant ways. In the end, India was not

useful in achieving America's grand strategic goals and, in fact, was perceived as actually helping the Soviets to undermine them. Any strategic interest that the US perceived in South Asia lay primarily with India's arch-rival, Pakistan. Pakistan, at least notionally, supported American grand strategic goals, including participating in anti-communist military alliances such as the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Brines, 1968). Pakistan also allowed Washington to use its territory as a base for over flights to eavesdrop on the Soviet Union, in addition to serving as a vital means for American arms shipments to anti-Soviet forces in Afghanistan during the 1980s. In return, the Pakistanis received substantial American economic and military assistance (Macmohan, 1996). Apart from these strategic problems, India was economically unattractive during the Cold War. Given India's chronic underdevelopment, the US did not view it as a potentially serious trading partner, target for investment, or source of skilled labor. Thus, the US could reap few economic benefits through engagement with India. This economic weakness, in turn, severely constrained India's military capabilities and limited its ability to pose a direct threat to American interests in South Asia, further reducing India's relevance from the U.S. standpoint. In essence, during the Cold War, India refused to promote United States' grand strategic goals and offered few economic benefits, while posing little direct military threat to American interests. India therefore was largely ignored (Rotter, 2000). Thus, Pakistan deemed to be a faithful partner of the US at the cost of India that created anger among the Indians by the US decision to favor small, dictatorial Pakistan over a major democratic state such as India. America's support for Pakistan reached its zenith during the 1971 Bangladesh War, when US President Nixon "tilted" towards the Pakistanis and dispatched the aircraft carrier Enterprise to the Bay of Bengal. The last but not the least, India and the US spent several decades during the Cold War over issue of nuclear weapons proliferation. India's 1974 'peaceful nuclear explosion' had cast a negative impact on the US, and the later made South Asia a centerpiece of its non-proliferation efforts by initiating legislation such as the 1978 Nuclear Non-proliferation Act, The Pressler Amendment Act (Devin, 1998; Cohen & Ganguly, 1990).

PHASE OF COOPERATION IN THE POST COLD WAR PERIOD

The end of the Cold War marked a major shift in world politics and fundamentally restructured a number of relationships around the world, the India-US one being no exception. At the most basic level this meant ideological change. Nonalignment became redundant in the absence of superpower competition. Enough time had passed to render anti-imperialism dated. The US was confronted with a volatile international dispensation featuring multiple smaller powers rising fast. India and the United States were still the world's largest democracies, but that fact at the time, as in the past, offered no template for future cooperation. Looking back to the early 1990s, few would have predicted the depth and breadth of relations between the two countries today. What explains this quantum leap? Economic factors in 1991, a watershed in Indian history, faced with a serious balance of payments crisis, Prime Minister Rao's government initiated significant reforms to liberalize the Indian economy under the stewardship of Manmohan Singh, then the finance minister. This opened the door to foreign private capital, a significant amount of which was from America (David and Mukherjee, 2009). India-US relations, however, have entered into new phase of cooperation in a number of areas in the recent period. These include such identified areas as trade and commerce, defense and security, education, science and technology, nuclear energy, space, and last but not the least environmental issues. In a global economy, choosing a viable trading partner for its own is a task of high priority for any country. India is just that kind of trading partner in India-US economic relations. A major study of the Council and Foreign Relations on US trade and investment policy noted a need for ambitious trade and investment negotiations with the biggest and fastest growing markets (Card, Daschle, Alden, & Slaughter, 2011). Trade and investment with India, as the US tries to pursue are not purely for economic gain from trading but strategic concerns has a role to play. US foreign and strategic policy is now undoubtedly shifting to recognize both the importance of "economic state-craft" and the growing importance of Asia. At this juncture, America's economic policy towards Asia-Pacific regions must include not just pacific nations, but also India, what is surprising that a strong and prosperous India is a need for US national interest. Economic Reforms introduced since 1991 have radically changed the course of the Indian economy and led to its gradual integration with the global economy.

Benefits of the reform process are visible in the form of better growth rates, higher investment and trade flows and accelerated decline in chronic poverty. The effects of these reforms on trade and investment relations with the United States have been profound. Since 2000, the two countries have been making efforts to strengthen institutional structure of bilateral economic relations by means of the "India-US Economic Dialogue" that aims at deepening the Indo-American partnership through regular dialogue and engagement. The India-US Trade Policy Forum (TPF) was established after the visit of the Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to US in July 2005 to discuss bilateral cooperation on trade and commercial engagements. Five Focus Groups under this have been discussing various trade policy issues of mutual interest relating to (a) tariff and non-tariff barriers; (b) services; (c) agriculture; (d) investment; and (e) creativity and innovation. The last and seventh meeting of the TPF along with Focus Groups (except the Focus Group in Services) in specific areas took place in Washington DC from September 21-22, 2010. In the Third TPF in 2007, Private Sector Advisory Group (PSAG) was created consisting of prominent Indian and international trade experts to provide strategic recommendations and insights to the US-India Trade Policy Forum. The reconstituted PSAG held its first meeting during the visit of Commerce & Industry Minister Shri Anand Sharma to Washington DC in March 2010. The second meeting was held in Washington DC on September 21, 2010 on the sidelines of the TPF USA (Desk, 2011). Indo-US Trade relations was reinforced by other measures based on dialogue and cooperation. The Indo-US Commercial dialogue and High Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG) were such initiatives to enhance cooperation covering the areas including: (a) trade and defense measures, (b) small enterprises, (c) capacity building on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), (d) review US export License regime for export of high technology to India. So, the other important breakthrough in the Indo-US relations is the progress of defense cooperation over the last few years. Combating terrorism is a prime task for both the countries. Defense cooperation between India and US reached a renewed phase on June 28, 2005 when the two sides mutually agreed to adopt reciprocal beneficial defense cooperation through the existing security dialogue, service, legal exchange, defense, trade and technology transfer and collaboration. On 18 July 2005, the US government authorities officially

announced the existence of a negotiated framework for nuclear cooperation between the US and India. On 2 March 2006, US President George W. Bush sealed a civilian nuclear cooperation deal with India, which brought to an end more than three decades of US sanctions against India following the latter's nuclear test in 1974. On 9 December 2006, Congress passed an amendment to a US law to allow the deal to go ahead; and on 18 December 2006, President Bush signed into law a new Act referred to as the Henry J. Hyde United States-India Peaceful Atomic Energy Cooperation Act, 2006, which establishes the legal framework of the proposed nuclear cooperation with India. US and Indian authorities are currently negotiating the operational part of the cooperation on the basis of the new Act. However, the proposed deal has already given rise to divergent responses from different experts around the globe. Some criticize it as either failing the nuclear weapon non-proliferation test, or as making India a vessel of US foreign policy, but, there are others, who praise it as a bold initiative towards strengthening the nuclear weapon non-proliferation regime. However, apart from these concerns, the US-India deal raises two important issues that may become fundamental from the perspective of shaping the future of the international effort to prevent the proliferation of dangerous weapons. The first relates to the legal implications of the nuclear deal and its consequences on other serious actors in the field of nuclear non-proliferation. Such a deal will certainly impact on their behavior in the future as regards non-proliferation matters. The second issue relates to the unexpected or unforeseeable positive effects the US-India deal could have on the existing non-proliferation regime.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the history of Indo-US relationship for most of the past six decades was essentially a history of distrust, unfriendly and frosty. Why then has their relationship changed so radically in recent years and what are the factors that are largely responsible for bringing about changes in their outlook and policies? An understanding of the changed international scenario has prompted both the countries to rethink in a new way. The structural, domestic and individual leadership, by and large, have been responsible for this shift. At the structural level, the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union and the consequential end of Cold War that casted a profound impact on India's foreign and strategic policies

prompted India to rethink about its foreign strategic options. As noted in the earlier section, despite its policy of neutrality, India had maintained a close relationship with the Soviet Union. The collapse of the Soviet Union forced India's policy makers to recalculate their strategic options. As a result, Indian officials began exploring other possibilities. Indian foreign policy has experienced a shift in their reflexive opposition to American strategic, economic, and diplomatic policies and convinced to open new windows in the pursuit of mutually beneficial endeavors. The US, on the other hand, for its own interest, was no longer eager to view India in the light of its partnership with the erstwhile Soviet and was ready to reevaluate Indo-US relations on their own merit. Second was the greater readiness of some of the chief foreign spokesmen of India to maintain substantially closer relations with the US. Third is the dominance of economy in the bilateral relations among nations. According to an estimate in the 1990s Indo-US trade grew by 264%. Thanks mainly to information technology-related sales, the balance of trade is greatly in India's favor—by 2002 Indian exports to the US had reached US \$11.7 billion while imports stood at US \$3.7 billion (*The Hindu*, 2002). The USA, as Britain and other world's major economies like Japan, China, Brazil, Canada, Mexico, South Korea, is easily India's biggest market. This is one of the important issues that view the relationship with Washington with a particular importance for India. The fourth factor that accounts for the closer ties between the two countries has been the rise of large body of Indian immigrants from well educated background in the USA over the past two or three decades. By 2001–02 India was, after Mexico, the second main source of legal migrants to the US (*New India Express*, 2002), and accounted for the largest body of foreign students (Institute of International Education). A quarter of the graduates of the elite Indian Institutes of Technology go to the US and Indian Americans own more than two-fifths of the new technology start-ups in Silicon Valley (Cohen, 2001). Bilateral factors were also significant. India got active support from the US corner that ultimately led the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Kargil and might get US support for initiating confidence building measures to settle border hostilities between the two neighbors. So, expectations are mounting for a redefined Indo-US friendship. The Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) that had troubled Indo-US relations since the

mid 1990s was resolved by the positive interference of the Bush Administration. The demolition of World Trade Centre, known as 11 September disastrous happenings by international terrorist attack, brought India and US closer to each other with a view to fight 'war against terrorism'. Continuous dialogue at the political and official levels on bilateral, regional and global issues between the two countries has attracted the attention of all international actors and non-actors. The visit of Prime Minister, Dr. Monmohan Sing from 22-26 November, 2009 and reciprocal visit of President Barrack Obama from 6-9 November, 2010 (*The Hindu*, 2013) had initiated a long time framework for Indo-US global strategic partnership and President Obama had characterized Indo-US relationship, "as one of the defining partnership of the 21st century."

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