

## **Indo-US Relations: A Paradigm Shift (The Post Cold War Period)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*The Indo US relations have been a matter of great interest for scholars, right since the beginning. The true nature of relations between the two nations became a matter of careful observation for International Relations scholars. The cold war and the ensuing politics between the super powers influenced foreign policies of nations. The relations in the beginning were not so cordial considering the fact that India accepted the policy of Non alignment and Panchsheel. The cold war period saw a different balance of power in the region.*

*The post cold war period proved to be a turning point in the relations between the two nations. The Clinton era marked a paradigm shift in the relations between the two nations. Many decisions of cooperation between the two nations were made during this period. This was followed by a favorable Bush administration. Several landmark agreements were signed during this period. The Obama administration too was favorably inclined towards India. It treated India as a growing power in Asia. This continuity of policy could also be witnessed during the Trump era. The world is watching with great interest how event events will unfold in the coming years with the new administration in place.*

**KEY WORDS:** Cold War, Engaged Democracies, Natural Ally, Non Alignment, Strategic Alliance

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### **I. INTRODUCTION**

The relation between the United States and India has been a matter of interest to scholars of international relations right since the beginning. The advent of the newly emerging independent states of Asia and Africa converged with the rise of the super powers and the outbreak of the cold war. The world looked with great curiosity towards independent India to see if she joined hands with the largest democracy of the world. India's decision to remain non-aligned was a setback to the movement of democracy that the US was building at that point of time. The shadow of the cold war and non alignment shaped Indo-US relations for a long time to come.

This paper specifically tries to understand the nature of Indo US relations in the post cold war period when the world was transforming itself from a bipolar system to a unipolar system and then finally to a multipolar system. There has been a paradigm shift in the nature of Indo US relations in these changing times. The hallmark of Indo US relations is the strategic component. The US interest in South Asia during the cold war was viewed by India with growing concern. Strategic and defense needs of both the nations was bringing them together time and time again. India now, is regarded as a potential global power and hence is regarded as a natural ally of the US.

### **II. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Historically, it is perceived that both India and US share common political and cultural values. Both are democracies which emphasize on fundamental rights and judicial review. Structurally, the federal democracy accepted is common. Philosophically too democratic values are deep rooted in both the nations.

The two nations are considered to be the largest democracies of the world. It is believed that all big countries with significant populations should cooperate with each other for the good of the world community. We are both democracies believing in human values. Civil liberties are respected and guaranteed by the law in both the nations. We both have a free and assertive press, which is the pillar of our democracy. Both encourage freedom of thought, speech and association.

However, with NAM, India and US were distanced from one another. US believed that India was sitting on the fence. India refused to be a part of the cold war military alliance. In 1956, America firmly established relations with Pakistan. Pakistan became a member of SEATO and moved closer to the American alliance. Arms and aid were provided to Pakistan and attempts were made to move Pakistan to a strong position

with relation to India. The Islamabad-Washington-Beijing Axis that had developed was a serious strategic threat to India [1]. On major international issues, there were differences between India and US. Initially with regard to China, India accepted China as a sovereign state and fought for securing China's membership to the UN. It also signed the 1954 treaty with regard to Tibet. The Americans were initially skeptical about the Chinese and their close association with Russia. The low phase in India and US were numerous. There were differences that emerged during the Korean War, India's opposition to the American action in Vietnam, US military support to Pakistan with regard to Kashmir and so on.

There are several issues of cooperation also between the two. In 1962 during the Sino Indian war, the Russians did not support India. It was the Americans who came to the assistance of India against China. It provided India with military assistance. However in 1971, Pakistan used Patton tanks, fighter planes supplied by America. The American Seventh Fleet followed Indian forces in Bay of Bengal. In 1974 after the Atomic explosion, Americans refused to supply atomic fuel to India. It sought to pressurize India to sign the NPT. Nehru's policy of non-alignment and the US stance on Kashmir gave birth to bilateral relations between US and India that scholars termed as a 'missed partnership' [2].

### **THE POST COLD WAR WORLD: A PARADIGM SHIFT IN INDO-US RELATINS**

It is however, in the post-cold war world that new interests between the US and India developed at the same time consolidating the old. The disintegration of the US alongwith the strengthening of the processes of democratization, good relations have developed between India and US.

India is a dominant power in the Indian Ocean. India's rise in the Indian Ocean region counteracts the challenge posed by China. A strong and influential India will mean a more multipolar world and this is a challenge to Chinese interests. China now regards India as her main Asian rival. India who has consolidated power in its own region will be tempted to exercise power farther afield including West Asia, East Asia, and South China Sea. Since the end of the cold war, India and the US have to contend with the strategic containment of China. India is perceived to be a responsible player at the regional and global levels. India has expanded its strategic vision and also its security interests [3].

### **THE CLINTON ERA**

The relations between the US and India were shaping well during the Clinton era. The Pokhran II nuclear tests conducted by India were a setback to the buildup to the relations. US imposed sanctions on India. But it did not affect India too adversely. A few years after the test India's relations with US were back to normal. US strategy with India is based on common strategic, defense, economic and political interests. One of the achievements of India was the support they were able to garner during the Kargil war. The Clinton era laid the foundation for transforming India- US relations which got a boost during the 1<sup>st</sup> Bush administration. The Clinton strategy was twofold. It emphasized the subject of markets and trade and also nonproliferation [4].

The Bush administration carried this policy further with a transformed nuclear strategy. This resulted in the announcement of the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) by President Bush in 2004. This later was reflected in the Civilian Nuclear Agreement of 2005.

For all this a strategic and defense partnership was required. This increased defense cooperation between the nations. Joint military exercises were held to learn best practices from one another. The strategic and defense partnership was influenced by factors such as defeating terrorism, promoting democracy, defense operability, energy cooperation, technology cooperation, improving economic ties. This carried the missed partnership in 1947 to natural allies in 1998. This transformed relations from estrangement to engagement[5].

The greater the American sympathy for India's emergence as a global power the larger the prospect of New Delhi working with Washington on major global issues. US view its relation with India as central to maintaining long term stability in Asia and in fighting terrorism. The natural ally outlook was based on several considerations like strategic containment of China, Pakistan connection with Taliban etc.

While China US relations are based on business considerations, with Pakistan it is about military affairs, Indo US relations are more comprehensive. It involves exchange of technology, parliamentarians, same type of approach to organizing society on tolerant lines and respect to all religions. Indo US relations are multidimensional in character. It is qualitative represented by the nuclear deal, strategic alliance in Indian Ocean, defense cooperation, commonality of interests, and fight against global terrorism, Pakistan extremism, and China's hegemony. The first half of the 1990s have been described as one of missed opportunities and contradictory policies [6].

India US relations have made great progress during the Obama Period as well. There has been a paradigm shift in relations. It has become comprehensive and multidimensional. The bilateral relations between the two nations were based on certain realistic considerations like Strategic alliance in Indian Ocean to keep China out, efforts to enter the South China Sea and project military power directly against China are some of the

priority areas. The priority of Interests between the two nations during this period was the mutual desire to control the hegemonistic rise of China [7].

There are several areas of cooperation too like strengthened intelligence sharing, upgrade and expand anti-terrorism program, launch cyber security, improve border monitoring, enhance measures against narcotic trafficking, and provide mutual legal assistance. India and US are working together to support the creation of strategic, innovative, dynamic, knowledge based economies [8].

Agreements are being completed that will allow for the launch of US satellites and satellites containing US components by Indian launch vehicles. The US is also funding Intellectual Property Rights training programs to strength enforcement and patent examination.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The post 9/11 world has acknowledged that terrorism is a global threat that needs to be addressed. America seems to be committed to promote democracy as a means of stabilizing the international environment. But India still has doubts over American sincerity. America has often seemed to prefer to depend on military dictators than on democratically elected governments.

India's pursuit of closer ties with the US is intended to enhance her own power in Asia. Since the 9/11 attacks, Asia has been viewed by US as a region of strategic importance to our future. India has been a supporter of the US and India's longterm objective is to become a permanent member of the UNSC. India has refused to sign the NPT and CTBT but also is opposed to nuclear proliferation of nuclear weapons.

More specifically, the U S is bound to help India in nuclear non-proliferation. One of the key justifications in signing the civilian nuclear agreement was to strengthen the overall global non-proliferation efforts, strengthen defense trade and build strong military ties. India's defense industrialists and government have long complained that questions about US reliability as a supplier due to past nuclear sanctions, has discouraged them from buying American military hardware. Recent passage of US legislation and IAEA allowing civil nuclear cooperation with India opened the door for a major boost in defense trade.

The prospective India US partnership will need to involve close engagement on developments in Asia and greater word of policies both bilaterally and through regional multilateral arrangements.

As India is both a rising power and a democracy, US view its growing influence in the world as broadly convergent with US interest. Democracy is the objective for which these nations are working. Stable democracies are largely peaceful and better able to manage the challenges of globalization.

There are problems that India and US need to overcome before they can attain a true global partnership in Asia. They need to work more effectively to counter terrorism drug trafficking and nuclear proliferation in Asia.

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