



An Analysis of Indo-U.S. relations: Historical perspective

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Abstract

Today the India-U.S. bilateral cooperation is broad-based and multi-sect oral, covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health. Vibrant people-to-people interaction and support across the political spectrum in both countries nurture our bilateral relationship. The is report analyzes American and Indian interests in a range of policy domains in order to evaluate how the United States should balance its policies toward India with its other priorities and responsibilities.

Keywords: India, U.S.A, historical, perspective, socio, economic and political

Introduction

Soon after the end of the George W. Bush presidency, many long-time observers in India and Washington charged his successor with abandoning the cause of elevating U.S.–India relations to the pinnacle of American foreign policy priorities. Veteran Indian diplomat Kanwal Sibal lamented, “The confidence of the Indian establishment the India–U.S. relations were set on a steep upward trajectory has eroded noticeably with President Obama replacing President Bush.” Daniel Twining, a former Bush administration official, reported in the Weekly Standard that Indians frequently say, “We miss Bush.” India’s strategic community, he notes, is “concerned about (and in some cases, alarmed by) the president’s approach to Pakistan; his strategy for Afghanistan; his willingness to pursue a more robust Asia policy that raises the costs Chinese assertiveness; the absence of American leadership on trade; and his commitment to treating India as a key power and partner in world affairs in a way consistent with Indians’ own sense of their country’s rising stature and capabilities.” The Indian-born American scholar Summit Gangly wrote in Newsweek this April that “Barack Obama is in danger of reversing all the progress his predecessors, including George W. Bush, made in forging closer U.S. ties with India. Preoccupied with China and the Middle East, the Obama administration has allotted little room on its schedule for India, and failed to get much done in the short time it did make”^[1]

Like a Rorschach test, commentary as President Obama prepares to go to India tells us as much about the authors as it does about the president, his policies, or India. Much of the commentary is negative, but this in part reflects the tendency of people to speak up only when they have something negative to say. More interesting is the proclivity of critical Indian pundits to yearn for the friendly presence of George W. Bush. For their part, many American commentators see Chinese and Pakistani monsters sneaking up behind Obama’s thin, unsuspecting frame and wonder why he is not standing closer to India’s Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Nostalgia often colors perceptions and mixes fact with wishful projections. Former Bush administration official Evan Feigenbaum notes in Foreign

Affairs, “Many in India believe that the Obama administration has tilted its policy toward Beijing in a way that undermines Indian interests.” Yet, Feigenbaum rightly goes on to say, “Obama’s China policy is broadly consistent with that of every U.S. president since Richard Nixon.” Obama has been tougher on Pakistan than Bush ever was (which is not saying much). Even stalwart Republicans acknowledge that Obama’s Afghanistan policy is struggling to clean up the damage caused by the neglect and mismanagement of his predecessor.^[2]

Objectives

1. To study the historical perspective of U.S.A and India relations.
2. To know the U.S.A and India relations impact on socio, economic and political power of India.

A historical perspective of U.S.A and India relations

The historical links between the United States and India can be traced to the year 1492, the year when Christopher Columbus discovered America in the course of his search for a new route to India. But formal and official relations began after India gained independence. Prior to this, “American contacts with India had started before the American Revolution through soldiers and seamen who had lived both in the American colonies and in India.”^[3] “During the last quarter of the eighteenth century, several American ships visited Indian ports in connection with trade. In 1784, the United States of Philadelphia reached Pondicherry; in the following year, the Hydra and the Grand Trunk were sent to India. Legal authority to Indo-U.S. trade was given by Jay’s Treaty of 1794 between England and America. Benjamin Joy of Boston was appointed the first American Consul at Calcutta in 1792. The American businessmen who came out to India, being interested only in their trade, could hardly present a true picture of India to America. Later, both countries had mutual contacts through various agencies such as missionaries, tourists, intellectuals and Indian freedom fighters. In 1815, the American Mahratta Mission was established. Missionary activities gave first hand information about India to the Americans. Their main

interest was to establish schools and distribute religious literature. They worked among the poor. They did a lot of humanitarian work during the famines of 1897 and 1899. On their return home, the missionaries condemned India for lack of education, poverty and superstition. "The number of missionaries in India rose from 139 in 1885 to 2478 in 1922. [4] "In 1883 the Brahmo 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. [5] 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 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. [6] 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. As M.C. Chagla observed: "The people of the United States always sympathized with the aspirations of the Indian People for freedom. Indian political leaders always found a platform in this country to propagate their views." [7] The war message of President Wilson delivered in the Congress was a source of great inspiration to the Indian freedom fighters. It reads: "America is prepared to fight for the ultimate peace of the world and for the liberation of its people; for the rights of nations great and small and for the privilege of men everywhere to choose their way of life and of obedience; for the rights of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments; for the right and liberties of small nations; for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free. [8] In spite of the contribution of the American people towards India's struggle for freedom, the attitude of the U.S. Government was discouraging. The U.S. Government did not want to displease the British Government. 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, 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 feeling was far more prevalent in the United States today than pro-British opinion in connection with the present upheaval in India. [9] President Roosevelt wanted some sort of a solution of the Indian problem but hesitated to involve himself directly in the efforts to evolve such a solution." He sent a cable to Churchill on 10 March 1942, suggesting the formation of a Government in India representing the various religious, geographical, and occupational groups, as well as

the British Provinces and native princes. He thought that such a Government could be treated as a "temporary Indian Dominion Government. [10] Nehru wrote to Roosevelt: "Dear Mr. President, I am venturing to write to you as I know that you are deeply interested in the Indian situation today and its reactions on the war. The failure of the Cripps Mission to bring about a settlement between the British Government and the Indian People must have distressed you as it distressed us. [11] Gandhi wrote to him: "The Allied troops will remain in India during the war under treaty with Free India Government that may be formed by the people of India without any outside interference, direct or indirect. It is on behalf of this proposal that I write this to enlist your active sympathy. [1] To this, President Roosevelt replied on August 1, 1942: "I am sure that you will agree that the United States has consistently striven for and supported policies of fair dealing, of fair play, and of all related principles looking towards the creation of harmonious relations between nations... I shall hope that our common interest in democracy and righteousness will enable your countrymen and mine to make common cause against a common enemy. [12] The Cripps Mission failed to produce the desired result. President Roosevelt was disappointed at the failure of the Mission. In his letter to the British Prime Minister dated April 11, 1942, he conveyed his feelings. Though the Cripps Mission failed to achieve any result, it heralded the beginning of Indo-American political relations. India became free from British rule on August 15, 1947. A new era began with the message that President Henry S. Truman sent to Lord Mountbatten, Governor General of India, extending his good wishes on the occasion. The message said: "I earnestly hope that our friendship will in future, as in the past, continue to be expressed in close and fruitful cooperation in international undertakings and in cordiality in our relations one with the other. [13] Prime Minister Nehru in an address to an American audience remarked: "May I also say that all of us in India know very well, although it might not be so known in public, what great interest President Roosevelt had in our country's freedom and how he exercised his great influence to that end. [14] India and the United States, being separated from each other by thousands of miles, had few opportunities in the past to come close to each other. The British Government also did not want the two countries to establish direct contact, for it feared that India might get inspiration from the United States for intensifying its political struggle. Richard L. Stout, staff correspondent of the Christian Science Monitor, observed: "Until the sudden emergence of the U.S. as a leader of democracies and the unexpected assumption of a world role, few Americans knew very much or cared about India. Now India suddenly has sailed into their ken. Similarly, far off India, with teeming millions, is discovering the United States. [15] Before the accession of the Jammu and Kashmir to the Indian Union, Pakistan invaded and captured large part of it. Nehru brought the matter to the notice of the Security Council at the UN, on January 1, 1948. At the United Nations, Britain and the United States managed to convert Pakistan's aggression on India into an Indo-Pakistani question. The United States maintained a cryptic silence about India's complaint. Instead of declaring Pakistan as the aggressor, the American delegate laid emphasis on the need to settle the issue by means of a plebiscite in Kashmir. The role of the United States in the Security Council all through

the discussion of the Kashmir question was that of supporting the case of Pakistan and was naturally not appreciated in India. ^[16] The United States, through direct negotiations (1953-56) was taking a very keen interest in the affairs of Kashmir. It realized the strategic importance of Pakistan to its plans for establishing military bases all around the Communist world. It was interested in solving the Kashmir question because this was the best way to oblige Pakistan. ^[17] Nehru and Prime Minister Mohammad Ali of Pakistan met in Karachi in July 1953 and later in New Delhi in August 1953 to solve the Kashmir problem. In the mean time, the U.S. proposal for military aid to Pakistan came up and queered the pitch. Grant of U.S. military aid to Pakistan at a time when India and Pakistan were carrying on direct negotiations made it clear that the United States was not interested in finding a solution for the Kashmir question. ^[18] In the wake of the Chinese invasion of its northern territories in October 1962, India asked the UK and the United States for military assistance. To quote Bhagat Vats: "When the Chinese attacked India in October 1962, America and Britain give nominal aid but with the sinister condition that India should settle the Kashmir question with Pakistan. They talked less of China but more of Kashmir. ^[19] Because of their divergence of security and strategic interests, both India and the United States have manifested serious differences on several international issues. The Communist Revolution of 1949 in China was seen as a threat to the U.S. policy of containing Communism. India promptly recognized the new Communist regime of China on December 30, 1949. India always ^[20] supported the move to admit Communist China as a member of the United Nations. This difference over China embittered the Indo-U.S. Relations. Although the United States could not maintain its distance from China after 1971. Diego Garcia has been another irritant between the two countries. It is an island in the Indian Ocean, about one thousand miles from the Indian coast. The United States has established a naval base there. India felt that the base in the Indian Ocean might turn the ocean into a cockpit of super power rivalry. ^[20] Though a strong advocate of nuclear disarmament, India refused to sign the NPT (1968) on the ground that it is highly unequal and discriminatory. The United States did not look kindly to India's first nuclear test in 1974. Later on, she stopped supplying enriched Uranium for the Tarapur Plant, as provided under the bilateral agreement of 1963. However, the above mentioned differences should not lead to the impression that Indo-U.S. relations have been one of unrelieved tension; at times, it has been punctuated by brief intervals of warmth and friendly gestures well. To illustrate, both India and the United States were on the same side on the Suez Canal issue in 1956, Again in 1959, when President Eisenhower visited India, he was given a tumultuous welcome and the President on his part observed: "The strength of India is our interest." Similarly, in October 1962, when China invaded India, America along with Britain came to support India and thereby saved her from a military disaster. Indo-U.S. relations became very cordial during the Kennedy period. His successor, President Johnson also kept the cordiality intact by establishing the Tarapur Atomic Plant and by supplying a large quantity of food grains to enable India to fight over the acute shortage caused by the severe drought in 1966-67. Again in 1973, as a friendly gesture, the United States wrote off the largest

amount of foreign debt ever cancelled in history by liquidating two-thirds of its accumulated rupee holdings (\$2 billion) in India acquired in return for wheat shipments under PL- 480. It was a case of rare magnanimity on the part of Washington. Again, in 1978, President Carter paid a goodwill visit to India to register and restore American sympathy and amity for India. Its economic aid, suspended since the Bangladesh crisis, was resumed and the U.S. government agreed to supply the fuel for the Tarapur Plant. Clearly, Carter was predisposed to look to India as the leader of South Asia, but unfortunately these brief intervals of warmth were soon followed by bouts of bitterness and disillusionment for one reason or another. However, since the early eighties, India has been pursuing a well planned policy of improving and strengthening relations with the United States. The visit of Indira Gandhi to America in 1982 worked as "operation defrost" between the two countries. The improved process continued after Rajiv Gandhi took over in 1985. His visit to America in June 1985 was a smash hit. The Memorandum of Understanding regarding technology transfer was a definite landmark. The dramatic improvement in the superpower relationship since 1986 removed the Cold War constraints on the upgrading of Indo-U.S. relations. This process acquired a new momentum after the end of the Cold War in 1989. ^[21] some of the first shipments of Indian mangoes arrive in the United States, ending an eighteen-year ban on importing the fruit. The ban is lifted as part of an agreement reached by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh in 2006 to double trade between the countries within three years. In response, India says it will relax restrictions on importing Harley-Davidson motorcycles from the United States. Bilateral trade in goods and services totaled around \$45 billion in 2006 and rose to more than \$70 billion in 2010, according to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), an intergovernmental body that sets guidelines for nuclear exports, allows an exemption to its rules [PDF] that permits India to engage in nuclear trade for the first time in three decades. The waiver is approved following intense diplomatic efforts by the Bush administration, dating back to 2005 when Washington and New Delhi signed the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative. Ahead of the NSG negotiations, Secretary Rice lobbies foreign counterparts to support the waiver, making more than two dozen phone calls. Analysts say the deal is critical to India's economic growth and satisfying increasing energy demands. Chandrayaan-1 becomes the first Indian spacecraft to land on the moon. It carries two scientific instruments designed by NASA scientists, which later discover water molecules on the moon's surface. The achievement is one of many resulting from ongoing U.S.-India space cooperation dating back to 1963. Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorists from Pakistan attack the Taj Mahal Palace Hotel in Mumbai. More than three hundred citizens die in the three-day conflagration, including six Americans. The United States cooperates closely with Indian authorities, sending FBI investigators and forensics experts. U.S. President Barack Obama hosts the inaugural state visit of Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. Despite its symbolic importance, the trip fails to yield any significant breakthroughs in the bilateral relationship. U.S. Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner makes his first official trip to India to launch the new U.S.-India Economic and Financial

Partnership with Indian Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee. The ministerial-level meetings kick off an effort to institutionalize deeper bilateral relations on economic and financial sector issues. The United States and India formally convene the first U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue. A large, high-ranking delegation of Indian officials visits Washington, DC, and Secretary Clinton lauds India as “an indispensable partner.” President Obama says the relationship “will be a defining partnership in the twenty-first century.” Subsequent dialogues follow annually. The United States and India sign a Memorandum of Understanding in New Delhi to promote closer cyber security cooperation. The agreement is designed to fulfil one of the pillars of the U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue. Secretary of Defence Leon Panetta visits India to bolster military ties in the wake of the Obama administration’s announced “pivot” to Asia. The trip marks the first such visit since former Secretary of Defence Robert Gates met with Indian counterparts in January 2010. Manmohan Singh visits Washington in his last visit to the United States as India’s prime minister. The trip, which focuses on security, trade, immigration reform, and the civilian nuclear deal, marks the third meeting between Singh and Obama in four years. It comes amid a backdrop of domestic political issues in Delhi, a troubled Indian economy, and a government shutdown crippling Washington. The U.S. embassy in India announces Ambassador Nancy Powell’s resignation in the wake of a dispute over the arrest of an Indian diplomat in New York. The announcement comes amid the run-up to high-profile national elections. President Obama makes his second visit to India as head of state for India’s Republic Day celebrations. The president heralds the relationship between the world’s two largest democracies, saying, “America can be India’s best partner.” Obama and Prime Minister Modi announce a breakthrough on nuclear-related issues that could help implement the U.S.-India civil nuclear deal. Six months later, U.S. Secretary of Defence Ashton Carter and India’s defence minister, Manohar Parrikar, sign documents to renew the ten-year U.S.-India Defence Framework Agreement. After confronting two Indian men at a restaurant in Kansas, yelling “get out of my country,” a white man shoots the two men, as well as a third who intervened. One of the men, Srinivas Kuchibhotla, dies, and his friend, Alok Madasani, and the bystander are injured. India sends nearly one-fifth of the foreign students studying in the United States and more than three-quarters of the highly skilled workers approved for H-1B visas [PDF], but the racist attack sparks concern among Indians that the United States is not safe for them. Increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric causes some prospective applicants to rethink their plans. During a “two-plus-two” dialogue in New Delhi, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Secretary of Defence Jim Mattis sign an agreement with Indian Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj and Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) gives India access to advanced communication technology used in U.S. defence equipment and allows real-time information sharing between the two countries’ militaries. The agreement had been under negotiation for nearly a decade. The Trump administration terminates India’s preferential trade status, part of a program dating back to the 1970s that allows products from developing countries to enter the U.S. market

duty free. Trump says India has not provided “equitable and reasonable access” to its own market. Weeks later, India slaps tariffs on twenty-eight U.S. products in response to U.S. duties on steel and aluminium imposed in 2018. New Delhi had drafted the retaliatory tariffs earlier but held off on implementing them amid trade talks. At an Ahmedabad rally with an audience of more than one hundred thousand people, President Trump praises the U.S.-India relationship and Prime Minister Modi’s leadership. The two leaders announce plans to work together on counternarcotics and mental health. India agrees to purchase \$3 billion in U.S. military equipment, and U.S.-based Oil Company ExxonMobil announces a deal with state-owned Indian Oil Corporation. Despite years of negotiations aimed at resolving trade issues, officials do not reach an agreement, with divisions remaining over agricultural products, tariffs, and other areas. Amid Trump’s visit, deadly clashes between Hindus and Muslims that are connected to a controversial citizenship law break out in New Delhi. Trump does not publicly mention the violence or take a firm stance on the law, which critics say discriminates against Muslims. [22]

Conclusion

India-U.S. bilateral relations have developed into a “global strategic partnership”, based on shared democratic values and increasing convergence of interests on bilateral, regional and global issues. In reality, the United States can only contribute marginally to India’s success or failure. The actions of Indians at home and abroad will determine which path India takes. The United States will have much more influence on vital global issues—international if peace and trade, the future of the nuclear order, peace and security in Asia, climate change—that also shape the environment in which India will succeed or fail. Therefore, the United States can best serve its interests and those of India by ensuring that its policies toward India do not undermine the pursuit of wider international cooperation on these global issues. The imperative to strengthen the international system would obtain even if India had the capabilities and intentions of working closely with the United States to contest China. Yet, India’s interests, policies, and diplomatic style will often diverge from those of the United States, including in relation to China. Washington and New Delhi both want their share of economic, military, and soft power to grow relative to China’s (or at least not to fall), but both will also pursue cooperation with Beijing. For the foreseeable future, the three states will operate a triangular relationship, with none of them being close partners of the others. This is another reason why promoting multilateral institution-building is a sound U.S. strategy, and why India should be valued in its own right, not as a partner in containing China. Regular exchange of high-level political visits has provided sustained momentum to bilateral cooperation, while the wide-ranging and ever-expanding dialogue architecture has established a long-term framework for India-U.S. engagement. Today, the India-U.S. bilateral cooperation is broad-based and multi-sectoral, covering trade and investment, defence and security, education, science and technology, cyber security, high-technology, civil nuclear energy, space technology and applications, clean energy, environment, agriculture and health. Vibrant people-to-

people interaction and support across the political spectrum in both countries nurture our bilateral relationship.

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