

Strategic Engagement in Indo-U.S. Relations: Till Manmohan Singh Government

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Abstract

In a period of last 16 years, Indo—US relations grown to the point that the United States is now working to make India into a global power and a partner in the promotion of democracy. There have been seen important shifts in U.S. thinking, largely on account of India's rising geopolitical importance, its abundant market opportunities, and its role in ensuring power equilibrium in Asia. The United States and India have discussed cooperation on missile defense, nuclear energy, space and high technology earlier. Furthermore, the two has also opened a quiet dialogue on India's largest neighbor, China, whose rise is likely to pose the single biggest challenge to world security in the years to come.¹

The terrorist attacks in the US on September 11th, 2001 provided a possible basis for cooperation, but the United States, much to the chagrin of New Delhi, opted to go in for a partnership with Pakistan. Then, in 2002, when India and Pakistan had massed their troops along the border, the United States led the initiative to get both countries to stand down. India agreed to pull back its forces, following an American commitment to get Pakistan to rein in its support for terrorist groups that were operating from Pakistani territory and infiltrating into Indian Kashmir. Subsequently, Indian analysts criticised the United States for not putting enough pressure on Pakistan to end its support to terrorist organizations.² At the same time, however, the economic relationship continued to flourish while a new military relationship began to emerge. A series of joint exercises between the two countries, coupled with Indian naval vessels accompanying US maritime assets through the Indian Ocean, started a change in the relationship. A political betterment of relations also took place as the Bush Administration recognised the role that India could play as an emerging power in international affairs. Condoleezza Rice alluded to this when she stated: 'Also, India is emerging as not just a regional power but as a global power. We saw that in the work that we were able to do with India in the Core Group for the tsunami relief. I think there are many more opportunities—economic, in terms of security, in terms of energy cooperation—that we can pursue with India.

Keywords: Terrorist, South Asia, Taliban, Consequences, Pakistan, Simultaneously, Modernization, Territorial, Kashmir, Indian, Defence, Democracies.

Introduction

There Since then Bush Administration has taken the position that it should help India become a major power in the international system and that India would be a partner in the preservation of international stability and in the promotion of democracy. Central to the shift in policy has been the recognition of India as a de facto nuclear state and the willingness to transfer civilian nuclear technology to India. Also, there was the understanding that Washington would not ask New Delhi to put its nuclear weapons programme under safeguards.³ additionally, in June 2005; the two countries signed an agreement on defense cooperation. The agreement calls for 'expanding two-way defense trade and increasing opportunities for technology transfer, collaboration, co-production and research and development. US Defense officials said the two parties were close to finalising an agreement for permitting joint scientific research. From an Indian perspective, the new US interest in developing the country

into a major power fits into the nation's long-term objectives in international relations.

India's Expectations from America

Apart from nuclear recognition, the Bush Administration would have to move towards helping India to become a member of the Security Council; push for greater US and western investment in India, and provide civilian and defence technologies that help India achieve its required great power status. Also, importantly, the US would have to help India reach a long-term peaceful agreement with Pakistan. The Indian Prime Minister explained India's position on the relevance of the United Nations Organisation and the need for its expansion in a speech to the UN General Assembly: Unfortunately, the United Nations Organisation suffers from a democracy deficit. UN structure and decision-making process reflect the world of 19th not after 2000.' He also made it clear that unless the United Nations Organisation, 'becomes an organisation more representative or democratic of the contemporary world and more relevant to our concerns and aspirations, its ability to deliver on the M.D.C. and the democratic world, indeed on UN charter obligations, will continue to be limited.⁴

The J.W.Bush Administration, however, has only been willing to make Japan into a permanent member of the UN Security Council and that too without veto powers. India would like to have the veto status but, in the short run, at least become a non-veto wielding permanent member of the UN Security Council. What India would like, therefore, is for the Bush Administration to change its policy towards expansion of the Security Council and forward the case of the Group -4—India, Japan, Germany and Brazil, for inclusion in the Council. It is difficult to achieve this goal given the current reluctance of the Bush Administration to change its policy on expanded membership or on its perception of the utility of the United Nations Organisation as an organisation for maintaining world peace and security. The bitter debate in the United Nations Organisation over the gulf war, the eventual decision to out-flank the UN, and the French and German decisions to stay out of the war, all worked to degrade the value of the United Nations in the eyes of the Bush Administration. It also served to strengthen the belief that the expansion of the UN Security Council would only lead to more gridlock and further decline in the utility of the organisation as an instrument facilitating the America in achieving its foreign policy objectives.⁵

The Indian case for inclusion in the UN Security Council, therefore, is bogged down in the general US suspicion about the role of the United Nations Organisation in achieving World peace and International security. To push the Indian case forward, therefore India would have to present itself as a more proactive player in World affairs. This would mean going beyond the traditional Indian role of offering peacekeepers under a United Nations Organisation resolution to one of actively participating in the maintenance of World security. This would also mean going outside the framework of the United Nations Organisation and offering to send troops to

calamities areas. This will admittedly be the most difficult thing for the Indian government to agree to do, but it may well be the price to pay for a United Nations Security Council membership. Indian strategy has so far laid in the belief that India's proportions.

The Kashmir issue with Pakistan

After Independence the Indian government has taken the position that all contentious issues between neighbour countries should be resolved through bilateral dialogue, but that may change as India seeks to permanently resolve the Kashmir problem with Pakistan. India seems more acquiescent to third party conflict resolution in the region. It was willing to permit Norway as the mediator to resolving the Tamil dispute. Kashmir is a most complicated matter between India and Pakistan. Indians and Pakistan have fought four wars or conflict over there. The government of India now recognizes that it has to bring about a long-term solution to the Kashmir issue and it may have to seek external assistance in doing so (the politically correct word is facilitator). What India would expect from the US is a set of short term and long term measures to help stabilise Kashmir. In the short term it would like the Bush Administration to continue putting pressure on the Pakistani Government to halt infiltration from Pakistan into Kashmir. The infiltration rate has fallen since the Musharraf Government took the decision to stop overtly supporting the Terrorists, but India would ideally like to see a complete halt to the process. Second, it would like to see the US use its influence on Pakistan to work with India to soften the border between the two countries and permit the movement of Kashmiris from one country to the other. Third, in the long run, it would like the US to help make the Line of Control into an international border. The last may be the most difficult to do and it would require a major rethinking of policy in Pakistan, given that Islamabad's strategy has been to argue that any permanent settlement will require the transfer of territory from India to Pakistan.

Bush Administration officials spent a significant part of 2002 mediating to prevent the outbreak of a major war between India and Pakistan. Since then, the two countries have established a peace process and agreed to a range of confidence building measures. Still, the problem of Kashmir is very much present. The Indian Prime Minister is arguing that India will not make territorial concessions to Pakistan, but instead will work to 'make these boundaries irrelevant.'¹⁷ As mentioned earlier, Pakistan, in its current policy mode, requires a territorial concession from India. Otherwise, General Musharraf's position within Pakistan would be challenged. But, at least in the short term, any exchange of territory is unlikely.

What seems more probable is an increase in confidence building measures between India and Pakistan, a possible softening of the border—as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh suggests—and a concerted effort to promote economic development in both parts of Kashmir. While the Indians would be amenable to such a solution, there is a lower level of incentive for Pakistan to pursue such a policy, since it

takes away one of the central tenets that has justified the in-out nature of military rule in Pakistan.⁶

To sell such a package to its people any Pakistani leadership would have to show that it had got commensurate gains from the West- particularly the US- to temporarily forgo championing the Kashmir issue. Such gains can only come from a long-term economic aid package that is aimed not only at higher growth rates, but also at more equitable development in Pakistan. Thus the US will have to put more money into the development of infrastructure, educational facilities, and public health care services in Pakistan. From an American perspective, such aid must be targeted precisely at those sections of Pakistani society that are socio-economically deprived and, therefore, the most vulnerable to Jihadi philosophies. For a Pakistani government, not only would such assistance help stem the Jihadi tide, but it would also show that the United States and the West have a long term commitment to Islamabad that extends beyond the destruction of al-Qaeda and the capture of Osama bin Laden.

The additional advantage of such a policy is that if both India and Pakistan were to maintain fairly even upward development trajectories, then they may both reach a level of economic standing where they feel more comfortable to make significant territorial and political concessions to each other. While borders between France and Germany mattered in 1935, they do not matter in 2005 because high levels of prosperity and economic integration have made the need for a militarised border irrelevant. A prosperous India and a prosperous Pakistan may also find that more creative solutions than territorial exchanges could work to resolve the Kashmir problem.

The China Factor

Part of the Bush Administration's saga with India lies in the fact that New Delhi is seen as a regional partner in the effort to contain China. As Donnelly and Wisner have argued: Although China and India have made great strides in resolving territorial disputes—particularly regarding China's recognition of India's claim to Sikkim-India and China will compete for energy, foreign direct investment, regional influence, and potentially arms. Although both nations share some fear of unmitigated American

Hegemony, the competition between these two nations may overpower their common interests and lead to tension and conflict.

In fact, India is seen as one of the partners capable of meeting the two principal challenges of the 21st century: radical Islam and a rising China. Former US Ambassador to India Robert Blackwell summed up India's preoccupation with China well:⁷

Strategic Agreement with America

India and the America signed a landmark strategic agreement On July 18, 2005 that had far reaching outcome. There were two important issues in this agreement. First of all American acceptance towards India as a "Responsible state with nuclear technology" amounted to tacit American recognition of India's status as a de facto nuclear weapons power outside the Non Proliferation Treaty. Second, the America offered to cooperate with India on civilian

nuclear energy issues. As per the agreement, the America would work to achieve full civilian nuclear energy cooperation with India as it realized India's goals of promoting nuclear power and achieving energy security for the fulfill country need .It would seek agreement from the Congress to adjust American laws and policies. The America would also work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civilian nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India .⁸

International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) energy project

India's inclusion as a full partner in the ambitious multinational 'International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor' (ITER) energy project was an acknowledgement of being a responsible nuclear state with advanced nuclear technology. The decision was taken by six partner countries -US, European Union, Russia, China, Japan and South Korea. "The decision recognizes that India can significantly contribute to such endeavours and also is recognition that India is a country with advanced nuclear technology, including in the field of fusion research,"⁹ said a spokesman for the External Affairs Ministry. ITER is the experimental step between the latest studies of plasma physics and future electricity – producing fusion power plants. The main ITER facility will be built in Cadarache in France by 2016 and all partners will participate in its construction, development and research.¹⁰

Conclusion

In the sum up, The United States and India have certain common security objectives and the Bush and later Administration of American president has taken steps to bring about a closer relationship between the two countries and to facilitate India's growth to great power status. In order to do so, however, India may have to forgo some of its traditional alliances and take a more proactive role in maintaining extra regional security. Only time will tell, how far India is willing to go along this path. The nuclear deal will improve India's global standing. India's deal with the US for transfer of nuclear technology will help it in a big way.¹¹

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