

## Converging Paths: Exploring the United States-India's Strategic Partnership in the Post-9/11 Era and its Potential Implications for South Asia

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### ABSTRACT

Traditionally states are making friendships and alliances to counter common threat or create balance of power in their area of influence. Such is the case of India and US in South Asia. Before 9/11 they were good friend but after the 9/11 attacks US interests in the region significantly increased while India had already regional hegemonic ambitions, thus it led to the strategic alliance between India and US. Their alliance is the true manifestation of realist paradigm of security centric approach in relations among states. The United States (US) was once Pakistan's traditional friend, but due to divergent national interests and diverse geopolitical objectives, it has now tilt towards India. This partnership encompasses a variety of factors, including economic considerations, political incentives, security concerns, military and defence necessities, and, perhaps most significantly, strategic considerations. As a result, the ultimate base for the US-India partnership has stronger strategic characteristics, and everything is entwined by the strategic connection. Afghanistan, the trade deficit, space, information technology, containing Chinese influence in South Asia, and, most significantly, defence and nuclear motivations are at the top of the list of broader strategic motivations. it is evident that the US's extensive engagement with India is leading to jeopardize the South Asian's security. It also led to Pakistan and China improved ties, thereby filling the absence of a foreign ally. Additionally, this presents numerous chances for South Asian countries to rethink their foreign policy priorities and move their emphasis from the West to the East. Due to the likelihood of numerous realignments, the US-India alliance will also advocate for regional alterations.

## **INTRODUCTION**

South Asia is composed of eight countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Due to its geo-strategic, geo-economic and geo-political location it has always remained the center of the focus of the extra-regional big power. The US is not the first country to take interests in the region, before it many foreign powers had showed interests as well. Central Asians, Persians, Arabs, Britishers and even Greeks, showed interests and many of them occupied the region from time to time. Around 1500 BC, Aryans from Central Asia arrived into Afghanistan via the Khyber Pass and began subjugating the indigenous population. The Persians conquered northwest India in 483 BC. Alexander the Great of Greece overthrew the Persian Empire and entered northern India. The Greeks left after his death in 317 BC and had little impact on Indian civilization. This illustrates that foreign governments have been interested in the Indian subcontinent since ancient times, not just after 9/11. Despite different incentives, the pattern maintained. In the archaic period, outsiders colonized and oppressed indigenous peoples. Muslims in the Middle Ages and Europeans in the early modern period populated the country before Britain seized it. Muslim conquest or invasion had several causes, but spreading Islam was the main goal. A power vacuum that attracted Europeans accelerated the decline of the Mughal Empire. Portuguese settlers in Goa were the first Europeans to arrive in India by water in 1498. British and Dutch influence increased in the seventeenth century as Portuguese hegemony declined. Europeans flocked to India for business prospects. British interest in India stemmed from two factors: raw materials and consumers. They ruled the subcontinent for about 200 years, utilizing the subcontinent's riches to build other colonies and promote domestic prosperity until 1947, when India attained freedom.

The United States' (US) interest in the region is not based on the same historical relationship with India that other powers had before its independence. For US interests, the division of the subcontinent and India's political independence were watershed moments. The United States' interest in the region was deemed peripheral since it did not rely on South Asian resources; rather, it was motivated by a desire to limit international communism and rein in Soviet expansionism in the region. The subcontinent was originally considered one geopolitical entity. The subcontinent was a key battleground for the US, USSR, and China throughout World War II and the Cold War. Washington prioritized Northeast Asia. Despite its fears of Soviet communism, the US did not oppose the Soviet Union's footing in India in South Asia, showing its disinterest in the region. Instead, the US has focused on the Indian Ocean and Pakistan's sovereignty. South Asia became increasingly important to the US and other industrialized democracies after the Cold War. India's rejection to accept Cold War-era divisions created an alternative geopolitical code that grew into the Non-Aligned Movement. Indeed, India's then-Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, wanted to portray the Third World as a place where people could make their own decisions without outside influence. Nehru's non-alignment strategy, in collaboration with other nations, sought to disassociate newly independent

countries from their colonial legacy. It appeared to be a broad objective, albeit it was unlikely to be accomplished given the global framework.

During the Cold War, India under Nehru strove to define its own position, which led to the Monroe Doctrine-like Nehru Doctrine. The Nehru Doctrine reflects India's dominance and, more importantly, its regional outlook. Pakistan needed to be forceful to deal with its surrounds existentialistically. It should be aligned with US-led military partnerships beyond NATO. The US' foreign policy toward South Asia, India, and Pakistan has fluctuated since independence. Taking a middle ground is bad for the US. Washington regularly exploits the split between New Delhi and Islamabad for its own short-term gain. As mentioned, the end of the Cold War helped regional understanding, regionalism, and free market economics emerge. The Cold War ended ideological conflicts and began bilateral and economic partnership for the Clinton administration. Thus, the Clinton Administration believed India had economic potential to be utilized. The Bush administration strengthened Clinton's economic and strategic relations. Both presidents gave India tremendous military aid, worsening South Asian security.

South Asia is close to Afghanistan, Iran, China, the Gulf states, and Central Asia, which attract the US and other regional countries, making it a powerful economic, political, and military force. Before the late 20th century, the US saw the region as backward, but this impression has faded. This timeline of India demonstrates how conquest and imperial enslavement have changed it. This tradition was revitalized after the Cold War, when all major countries, especially the US, showed renewed interest in India's growth. India's growing capacity in several fields shows that it is shifting from a passive beneficiary of external influence to an active operator in its region, helping to build a new international order. India's economic, political, and cultural dependence on others is gone. Due to skilled strategic leaders who have mastered resource use, India has begun to overcome its disadvantages.

American strategic interests in India have grown as India's economy liberalizes, and both countries want to do more with India since the Cold War. The US had to adapt to a changing world, and India has become more dependent on it for prosperity. Throughout subcontinental history, a new reliance pattern has emerged. Despite Pakistan and Afghanistan's role in the War on Terror, this study will also investigate India, the region's major power and a longtime US ally. As the world's largest democracy and a multi-sector expert, India may show its imperial strength. The study will also examine how these two countries deal with their historical differences, in which India no longer submits to colonial control while the US rules the world. The Cold War well-describes American international policy. America has been important in world affairs since 1945. Its policies have affected tens of millions of people thousands of kilometers distant. Israel, the Middle East, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya are examples. There have been 180 US military interventions worldwide in the past century.

The US's foreign policy shift from isolationism to full participation and from no alliances to diversified alignments showed how its national interests have shifted with its power post-World War II. Industry, agriculture, finance,

trade, GDP, GNP, per capita income, education, scientific discoveries, technological inventions, the techno-science workforce, defense, and nuclear capabilities are all dominated by the US. Ideas, images, and artifacts from the US have affected cultural movements abroad. With its vast military, diplomatic, cultural, and military assets, the US dominated the world after World War II, generating awe, horror, respect, and allegiance. The regional international political landscape has led some to view America as a global policeman, monopolizing foreign policy decisions to maintain peace and security. Three key events in the late 1990s elevated the region to US prominence. These included India's 1998 nuclear test with Pakistan, the 1999 Kargil War, and Clinton's March 2000 South Asian tour. South Asia's regional aspirations also become increasingly aligned with the US's. Political Islam, especially Islamic terrorism, boosted South Asia's strategic importance around the start of the 20th century. 9/11, like Pearl Harbor, threatened US security, forcing it to reassess its role in South Asian politics. The new century is thought to have begun on September 11, 2001, rather than January 1, 2000, due to the incident and a major upheaval in world politics. Following these strikes, the US joined New Delhi and Islamabad in the "war on terrorism" as a shared cause. With the goal of forging a more balanced regional relationship, partnering with Pakistan, and strategically engaging India, President Bush quickly relaxed sanctions and provided assistance to both. While the US War on Terror did not impede the steady growth of US-Indian ties, it did change the US and India's short-term aims.

Due to the 9/11 attacks, South Asia became a priority security concern for the United States, as it was the first region to jeopardize the security of its inhabitants' homeland. According to Richard Boucher, "September 11th solidified our understanding that stability in South and Central Asia was always vital," He claims that the United States' triumph in the region was crucial to the country's national interests. As a result, the US became more interested in bolstering its ties with India's political base, allowing India to play a larger role in not only preserving but also influencing US-India relations. As the US's commitment to maintain regional peace grew, India's utility as a bulwark against another source of instability, namely China's rise, grew.

In conjunction with the US, the Bush administration envisioned a strong, stable, and conflict-free India as a counter-strategic partner to curb China's regional dominance. This pattern was perpetuated by the Obama administration, which highlighted India even more and, in the opinion of some, marginalized Pakistan, in contrast to Bush's efforts to equalize the two. In general, any US policy aimed at reducing future barriers to American influence in Asia, whether they are connected to terrorism, commerce, nuclear proliferation, or the altering global balance of power, must include a critical strategic Indo-US relationship. Strong strategic relationships can also help the US expand its economy and collaborate on challenges like energy security and climate change. Both countries are multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracies that lay the groundwork for joint interests on global challenges. Increased economic growth in India will result in the country's ascension to global prominence and increased prominence within the country.

In the meantime, Keeping South Asia peaceful and stable is a reason for the US to ensure that India is perceived as a partner rather than a rival. The prevalent post-9/11 perspective on the US-India relationship asserts that the two nations' current level of amicable relations is the result of the 9/11 attacks on US soil. The US-India relationship was given its connective tissue because India's rise and goals have consequences for its potential role as a counterweight to China. As President George W. Bush Said:

*"We have an ambitious agenda with India. Our agenda is practical. It builds on a relationship that has never been better. India is a global leader, as well as good friend... my trip will remind everybody about the strengthening of an important strategic partnership. We will work together in practical ways to promote a hopeful future for citizens in both our nations."*

Furthermore, the study aims to answer the questions such as:

1. *Why the Indo-US partnership developed in Post 9/11 despite of the Indian non-alignment policy?*
2. *What were the factors behind the development of Indo-US partnership in the wake of 9/11 attacks?*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1. Practical Contribution of the Study

This study examines the evolution of the US-India Strategic Partnership in South Asia, focusing on power politics, ideological elements, and security implications. The relationship between the US, India, China, and Pakistan is crucial for regional stability, as other powers are either allies or heavily influenced by these countries. The US-India Strategic Partnership is justified by the need to counter China's growth and maintain its dominance in South Asia. The alliance can help the US prosper economically and cooperate on issues like energy security and climate change. India's rising economic might could lead to its elevation to global power status, boosting the US's incentive to consider India as a partner. However, collaboration is not expected, and India's desire to build positive relationships with diverse countries may strain its relationship with the US. The strength and duration of the alliance will depend on their mutual interests, cooperation, and overcoming previous animosity.

### 2. Theoretical Contribution of the Study

The relationship between India and the United States has evolved over time, with the United States moving further away from Pakistan. Following explicit and implicit indulgence, negotiation, and sway, the Indo-US cooperation ushered in a new factor in South Asia, which appears to have shifted the regional power balance equation. This relationship has various facets, including strategic, economic, and political ones, and it is one that may be attempting to alter the structure and tendencies of regional politics. The shifting power balance in the area will have numerous ramifications for South Asia's security. The political framework of South Asian country's foreign policy, as well as the governing strategic reason, would undoubtedly alter. Not only would the developing Indo-US relationship reinforce the strategic partnership between Pakistan and China, so bolstering Pakistan's survival and territorial integrity, but it will also reorient

Pakistan's gaze eastwards, particularly toward Russia. Furthermore, these developments would leave South Asia in a position where Pakistan-India ties could become more hostile.

### **3. Theoretical Construct**

Through the theoretical lenses of realism, Neo-realism, and balance of power theory, this study examines the consequences of the Indo-US strategic convergence for South Asia's security. The theoretical manifestation is the core of any academic or scholarly work because international relations is an amalgamation of historical facts, current policies and interests, and futuristic plans, but the theoretical account is what binds them all together. Without understanding and applying theory, one is left with only opinionated or fact-based accounts; thus, in social sciences, the theoretical foundation becomes the foundation of any study.

The strategic partnership among both India and the United States is a valuable cooperation targeted at attaining certain objectives. The United States' main goal is to balance China and keep South Asia in check, and India has been chosen to do just that. As a result, India and the United States' economic, space, military, intelligence, agricultural, and nuclear cooperation all point to that goal.

Strategically, as Daryl Kimball argues, Indian exceptionalism is an extension of US policy under the Bush Administration that “sets the United States above and apart from the rules other states are expected to follow” as a measure for “counter-proliferation and pre-emptive action to “deter, dissuade, and defeat” adversaries armed with Weapons of Mass Destruction. Despite the fact that such countermeasures are a major source of concern for Pakistan, a strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi was recommended at one point as a way to counterbalance Beijing. Sharon Squassoni stated that “Rather than India moving into the mainstream, the mainstream has moved to it, and echoing Indian exceptionalism as a violation of decades of global non-proliferation policy.” Exceptionalism in the case of India obviously indicates a change in US internal and international rules in India's favor, despite the fact that the US has legitimized its Indian exceptionalism by enlisting the support of other established nuclear power states. This exceptionalism has now been extended to the nuclear suppliers group (NSG) realm. Expectedly, Indian exceptionalism has sparked yet another conflict between the US and Russia, while also allowing China to expand its strategic cooperation with Pakistan. The argument for Indian exceptionalism was presented by Priyanjali Malik from a domestic prism, as Indian exceptionalism can be examined from both an external and a domestic perspective. According to Malik, India's strategic exceptionalism began much earlier than the BJP's 1998 nuclear test.

Meanwhile, the Indian concept of exceptionalism revolves around the protection of Indian sovereignty and independence from international nuclear policy, as well as a strict adherence to the Nehruvian legacy. On July 16, 2014, during his testimony before the US Senate Foreign Relations Sub-Committee on Near Eastern and South and Central Asian Affairs, Vikram J. Singh suggested that such exceptionalism was not just a calculated effort to advance mutual

interests, but also an attempt to carve out a role for India in the region and Asia Pacific. Catherine Kelleher and Judith Reppy argue that the United States' policy of exceptionalism toward India echoes the call for universal proliferation norms and demonstrates how the Bush administration stoked opposition to the strategic agreement, which is, by all accounts, in violation of international norms. A hundred Not only Pakistan, but also China and other international observers have criticized Indian exceptionalism. Exceptionalism's critics argue that it is a ruse to destabilize the region by upsetting the regional power balance rather than offsetting it. The Trump administration's recent National Security Strategy (NSS) reaffirms Indian exceptionalism. Different US governments frequently use the NSS document to outline strategic priorities and dealings (with foreign countries) for a given year. While Trump's National Security Strategy chastised Pakistan, it reassured India, in a portrayal that enraged Pakistan's National Security Advisor, Nasser Khan Janjua. The document depicted India as a growing power and economy with potential for cooperation with the US, whereas Pakistan is either labeled as a supporter of terrorism or chastised and threatened with economic sanctions if Islamabad does not change course and stop supporting terrorism and start acting responsibly as a good neighbor.

Despite the fact that India cannot be sanctimonious in the same way, Washington chose to ignore New Delhi's actions. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs did not go unnoticed by this assessment of India. "We appreciate the strategic importance given to the India-US relationship in the new National Security Strategy released by the US," said Raveesh Kumar, a spokesperson for the Indian Ministry of External Affairs. India and the United States share common goals as two responsible democracies, including combating terrorism and promoting global peace and security." By extension, the NSS report and India's response strengthen the strategic partnership between India and the United States, allowing India to assert its self-proclaimed political and economic hegemony of the region while also contributing to Indo-Pacific peace, stability, and prosperity.

There is an interesting link between US space technology and non-proliferation policy. Such ties put the Indo-US strategic partnership in jeopardy, as they raise the possibility of a conflict of interest between the two countries. Though not every scholar agrees with the Indian exceptionalism narratives and believes that the US should be wary of putting arms in the hands of New Delhi, which could jeopardize Washington's interests in the future. Richard Speier has issued a warning to the United States, urging the country to ensure that its future "glide path" does not relegate India to the status of a strategic target rather than a strategic partner. An intercontinental ballistic missile launched by India would be aimed towards the United States Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM). Space launch vehicle technology would be used to launch an Indian intercontinental ballistic missile, either directly via the PSLV or indirectly via the Agni, which is based on India's SLV-3. The United States would not have made any direct or indirect contributions to the acquisition or advancement of such technology. The world, including India, depends on the US being forthright and circumspect in this matter. The US must detour from its current "glide path" and

reposition itself and India in a more cooperative direction. It would be hilarious if the two became strategic objectives for one another in the goal of becoming strategic partners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in the realist paradigm of international relations to analyze the strategic alliance between the United States and India in South Asia. The research relies primarily on secondary sources, including academic journals, books, policy reports, official government documents, and credible think-tank publications. Through a descriptive and analytical approach, the study examines how shifting national interests, security concerns, and power-balancing strategies have shaped the evolving US-India partnership, particularly in the post-9/11 geopolitical context. The realist framework is employed to interpret state behavior, focusing on concepts such as national interest, regional hegemony, balance of power, and strategic alliances.

Furthermore, the study utilizes content analysis to assess key strategic areas underpinning the US-India relationship, including defense cooperation, nuclear policy, economic engagement, technological collaboration, and efforts to contain China's influence in South Asia. Comparative analysis is also applied to evaluate the implications of this alliance for regional security dynamics, especially its impact on Pakistan, China, and broader South Asian alignments. By examining patterns of cooperation and realignment, the methodology enables a systematic understanding of how the US-India strategic partnership contributes to regional instability while simultaneously creating opportunities for alternative foreign policy orientations among South Asian states.

## **RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The United States brings India into its Global Strategy**

The cooperation among the United States and India was always strong, but they improved under President John F. Kennedy. "Kennedy discussed India with more frequency and passion than any other nation," according to Robert McMahon. Kennedy's administration prioritized a positive relationship with India, investing heavily in the South Asian team. President Lyndon B. Johnson continued this policy, strengthening ties with India through the establishment of the Tarapur Atomic Plant.

The US proposed a 1966 agreement to India for enriched uranium delivery until 1994, requiring India to limit uranium sources. President Jimmy Carter's administration reassured India of US uranium supply. Despite the fact that India was not a signatory to Washington's non-proliferation treaties (signed in 1968 but not operative until 1970), the US supplied India with uranium. India's reluctance to sign regimes due to ideological concerns and opposition to nuclear weapons has weakened their relationship due to post-independence insecurities, regional tensions, and India's Cold War politics. The 1962 Indo-China war presented Washington with a unique opportunity to provide military support. This initiative did not prove to be successful. While the United States Congress debated its annual foreign aid bill, India surprised Washington by purchasing

MiG-21 fighter jets from the Soviet Union, causing tensions amid the two countries.

Following the war between India and Pakistan, US policy hyphenated the two countries together once more. During this time, the United States' policy toward South Asia resulted in an arms embargo on the subcontinent and a reduction in aid to India in successive years. This decision was taken jointly by the United Kingdom and the United States during the Johnson administration. Relationships between India and the United States became strained, sensitive, and unpleasant during this time. The Geneva Conference on Disarmament (CD) in 1965 sparked multinational talks.

The conference's theme was global nuclear disarmament, which enticed India to attend, with the hope that such a multilateral agreement would eventually lead to general disarmament and ensure India's security. India's indignation over Article VI of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was well articulated, so relying on the conference outcome was insufficient. The article, according to the Indians, was a weak promise for non-nuclear states to "pursue negotiations in good faith on effective measures relating to the early cessation of the nuclear arms race and nuclear disarmament, as well as on a Treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and effective international control," as it stated. The nuclear states recognized that such an article was merely a concession that could be broken at any time. As a result, India believes that the article does not effectively limit the activities of nuclear-weapons states. Unlike the Partial and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaties, which aim to limit and prevent nuclear production and proliferation around the world, the final version of the NPT lacked inherent power to challenge nuclear technologies' inherent contradictions and ambivalence.

The final version of the NPT contains no clear indications that states with limited or no nuclear technology will be completely free of fear and concern. India was hesitant to join the NPT because of this position. According to George Perkovich, the treaty was unable to provide India with security, particularly in light of the perceived threat from China. As a result, "the question of whether India should produce nuclear weapons to whether India should sign a treaty relinquishing the right to produce nuclear weapons" became debatable in 1967 and 1968. India's reservations about the Nuclear Power Treaty (NPT) stem from two major flaws: the exceptions for nuclear weapons, and the distinction between those with nuclear explosives and those without. The treaty maintains nuclear weapons' status quo but does not diminish their relevance in international affairs or foreign policy.

India's NPT negotiator, V.C. Trivedi, called the artificial distinction "global nuclear apartheid." The formalization and operationalization of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1970 marked a turning point and a new beginning for the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. Even after formalization, India was never admitted to the list of signatories. During this time period, President Nixon changed US foreign policy by revising US policies towards the subcontinent. This strategic shift led in favorable relations with communist China, with Pakistan playing a vital role in fostering mutual confidence.

Since the Cold War, US foreign policy has emphasized diplomatic rapprochement with India, Pakistan, and China. Nixon's intervention in 1971 strained relations, with Kissinger flexing American military muscle to prevent Soviet overruns. The US sent a nuclear-armed Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal, demonstrating its power as an ally to China, which angered India and brought relations to a new low.

### **United States and India's Convergence of Interests Under Various US Administrations and Analytical Approach of American Policies Towards India**

President Bush has strengthened bilateral relations between India and the US, moving from economic cooperation to a strategic alliance. This shift in US foreign policy and global affairs has disrupted the region's political balance and built an unmatched strategic alliance. Condoleezza Rice's January 2000 Foreign Affairs paper paved the way for the Bush administration to influence Indo-US policy. The US must expand military and economic connections with Japan, South Korea, and South Asia, with a particular emphasis on India. India is used by every serious American administration as a counterweight to China's calculations.

As a result, it is vital to underline that while India is not presently a big power, it possesses the capacity to develop into one. It is vital to help China's internal reform through economic contact while simultaneously restraining China's power and security ambitions. While cooperation is desirable, we must never be reluctant to challenge Beijing when our interests differ. Unlike his successors, who were non-confrontational with China and viewed Beijing as a "strategic adversary," Bush perceived and viewed China as a potential menace capable of wreaking havoc in South Asia and other areas of US interest. Apart from South Asia, the Bush Administration underlined the Asia Pacific region's importance to the US and the importance of collaborating with Asian partners to restrict China's power and security goals. US foreign policy toward Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and India should be amicable and helpful.

The Bush Administration prioritized collaboration with India over its nuclear program, particularly in South Asia, and promoting New Delhi's containment of China. Secretary of State Powell emphasized the importance of strategic partnerships with India, but also weighed the promise of nuclear sanctions relief. Trump met with Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh to deepen ties, which helped India gain confidence and see the possibility of forming an alliance with the US. In May 2001, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage visited India to help solidify a new strategic alliance. The 9/11 attacks impacted India's strategic relationship with the US, but also re-positioned Pakistan and South Asia on the US geopolitical radar to counter Soviet power and fight terrorism globally. The invasion of Afghanistan posed new challenges, leading to political and diplomatic turmoil, and the US and British governments engaged as mediators in India's fraught relationship with Pakistan. India's intervention was peaceful for both countries because Pakistan called off its army shortly after India's announcement, allowing diplomacy to prevail and the clouds of war to dissipate.

The war against so-called radical extremism brought the Indo-US alliance to a fork in the road, but different geographical terrain and size, as well as

extremism and terrorism, posed new challenges. Their cooperation was bolstered by the exchange of information and intelligence on how to best combat the threat. Thus, the US ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, "noted in a speech at the Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in January 2003 that the two countries were facing similar problems in promoting peace and liberty in Asia, combating international terrorism, and halting the spread of weapons of mass destruction."

### **Convergence of the US and Indian Strategic Policies after 9/11**

The 9/11 incident unquestionably ushered in a paradigm shift that fundamentally altered the international order's nature. This horrible act alone caused the United States to reorient and restructure its foreign policy toward the rest of the globe. As previously mentioned, the Bush Administration used and abused the terrorist assault in order to further its preconceived neo-con agenda. In reaction to the attacks, President Bush proclaimed a War on Terror and later published a "New National Security Strategy" in 2002, which became known as the Bush Doctrine. In his first State of the Union address on January 29, 2002, and in his book *Decision Points*, President Bush elaborated on the Bush Doctrine. The Doctrine was composed of three fundamental components. To begin, the US will make no difference among terrorists and those who support them, and will pursue prosecution of both. Second, the US would combat any dangers prior to their manifestation, and it would take preemptive action against adversaries prior to their attack on the US. Finally, the United States will challenge the adversary's oppressive and fear-based worldview by promoting liberty and hope.

The "axis of evil" is defined by President Bush as those who harbor terrorists and want WMD. He also claimed that the Afghan conflict triggered the War on Terror. The Bush Doctrine for Asia included creating an axis of evil to isolate Iran, Iraq, and North Korea, preemptive actions, and balancing bilateral and multilateral security within the regional order. The Bush Doctrine became a fundamental tenet of US foreign policy from the moment it was announced. It altered the way the US interacted with countries worldwide. It contributed in the rehabilitation and expansion of US relations with key countries at the time, including Russia, China, and India, all of whom were grappling with terrorism and insurgency.

Following the attacks, President Bush declared to the world, "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists. Either you are a supporter of civilization and the good or you are a supporter of barbarism and the evil." And those nations that make the wrong choice should exercise caution. Such a strategy eliminated the possibility of genuine disagreement. While Europe was apathetic toward this strategy, China was adamant in its opposition, believing that the strategic plan was intended to thwart Chinese military expansion. On the other hand, India was significantly more supportive of the Bush Doctrine, which could be attributed to a variety of factors. India wants the US to ease sanctions imposed after the 1998 nuclear test, help India secure a permanent seat on the UN Security

Council, and enhance economic ties with the US, and perhaps most significantly, its goal to supplant Pakistan as America's regional strategic partner.

## **2. Indo-US Strategic Convergence in Present Era**

In recent years, rival notions of regional order have emerged in Asia, with Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative driving the development of "Indo-Pacific" visions. The US has advocated a "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (FOIP) geopolitical idea as a counter narrative to possible Sinocentric reforms under Trump. The term has different meanings for Japan, Australia, India, and ASEAN. The FOIP is seen as an anti-Beijing containment strategy, with no unifying Indo-Pacific notion. The term refers to a wide range of opinions based on differing ideas of regional order, including inclusion or exclusion of China and the importance of bi-, mini-, and multilateral approaches to trade and security policy. These efforts will be sponsored mostly by US allies and, to a lesser extent, by the US's Asian strategic partners. In terms of security strategy, the US has increased its arms exports to partner countries, most recently to India, with the sale of F18 and F16 fighter aircraft.

The procurement of modern air-to-air missiles, anti-submarine warfare systems, missile defence systems and fighter jets would be accelerated in partnership with Japan and Australia. To the existing US military outposts in the region, the Lombrum naval facility on Manus will be expanded in conjunction with Papua New Guinea and Australia. Meanwhile, partnership in the military and defense sectors has improved. The ongoing counter-terrorism training provided by FBI personnel to Sri Lankan security services is one example.

The US has reinstated the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and escalated Freedom of Navigation activities in the South China Sea. The US has signed the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act and the Better Utilization of Investments for Development Act to strengthen its role as a donor in Asia and compete with Chinese development efforts. The International Development Finance Corporation (IDFC) will boost lending to disadvantaged countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, "state-directed initiatives with hidden strings attached."

The "Blue Dot Network" will collaborate with Australia and Japan to develop a high-quality accreditation system, while the IDFC's \$60 billion budget allows for \$1.5 billion annually for FOIP goals. A Transaction Advisory Fund (TAF) was formed as part of ITAN to help Asian partners examine the financial and environmental consequences of infrastructure investments. US \$100 million "Pacific Commitment" aims to triple development financing for Pacific governments over five years, with USAID increasing Western presence and Asian Development Bank establishing Pacific Region Infrastructure Facility. The Papua New Guinea Electrification Partnership was established in August 2007 with the purpose of upgrading Papua New Guinea's power supply substantially in conjunction with Australia and Japan, and New Zealand.

The "convergence of the Pacific" was one of the Indo-defining Pacific moments in August 2007, when Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe spoke in Parliament. Among other things, it emphasizes bringing together diverse perspectives on the Indo-Pacific as a strategic framework. Meanwhile, India's

1991 "Look East" policy, followed by 2014's "Act East" policy, focuses on Southeast Asia and fits into the broader Indo-Pacific agenda, with a precedence on strategic and safety matters. Moreover, Non-alignment and strategic autonomy, two long-standing foundations of Indian foreign policy, are critical components of India's Indo-Pacific idea. India's foreign policy is largely focused on China's strategic encirclement in the South China Sea, despite its large military presence and freedom of navigation concerns.

### **PM Modi's Recent Visit to United States and its Repercussions**

The recent trip to the United States by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was significant for a number of reasons. Along with reaffirming their status as "among the closest partners in the world," the United States and India announced a number of historic technology-related transactions in their joint statement on June 22. Nearly all technology fields were covered by the agreements, including cyberspace, space, quantum computing, artificial intelligence (AI), and others. This alliance was the culmination of decades of expanding technological cooperation between the two powers, and it did not just happen suddenly. However, the volume of agreements reached and the motivation behind them point to a new phase in India-US relations. These agreements' primary goals were to raise India's global standing and domestic technological capacity. Despite not being directed specifically at Pakistan, the expanding India-U.S. technological cooperation will undoubtedly have a lot of effects on India's western neighbor and have a negative impact on the strategic stability of South Asia.

### **3. Security Implications for South Asia**

The strengthening of the Indo-US strategic alliance could potentially shift the geopolitical landscape in South Asia and beyond. The alliance, which was previously stymied by a non-proliferation straitjacket, has become more pronounced after the 9/11 attacks. The US proposal to place India's nuclear technology under international supervision led to the signing of a landmark agreement on civil nuclear cooperation in 2005. This agreement aims to provide India with increased access to restricted commodities in the nuclear energy sector, potentially enhancing its nuclear power status. However, concerns have been raised that this could disrupt the regional power balance, spark a nuclear weapons race, and potentially jeopardize US multilateralism in South Asia. The implications of this are particularly significant given China's nuclear weapons program and Pakistan's nuclear test in 1998.

### **Indo-US Nuclear Deal Increases the Risk of Regional Nuclear Race**

Despite the fact that many experts have labeled the Indo-US nuclear agreement as inevitable and the two nations as "natural friends," it took both countries a long time to get to where they are now. In reality, it wasn't until 1992 that Indo-US security cooperation blossomed, when an Indo-US Army Executive Steering Committee was formed. Following that, the two fleets established a Joint Steering Committee, which conducted joint exercises in 1992. The US Congress

attempted to create additional categories for assisting India in 1993. This was done to move India closer to America.

India and the US inked their first defense pact in 1995, which included joint exercises. In 2000, Clinton and Vajpayee signed the Vision Document, pledging to "build a deeper and qualitatively different partnership between the United States and India" based on shared objectives for regional and international security. The landmark Indo-US civilian nuclear accord was signed during US President George W. Bush's March 2006 visit to India that marked a new era in US-India relations.

Besides the US and India, the Nuclear Suppliers Group's 45 members have endorsed the Indo-US nuclear deal. Another Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) member, the Indian Prime Minister, recently requested assistance on this matter. The treaty was approved by the powerful US House of Representatives International Relations Committee and later the powerful US Senate Foreign Relations Committee by large margins of 37 to 5 and 16 to 2. To preserve legislative oversight, the US Congress authorized the President to waive several limits under the Atomic Energy Act of 1954. If the President of the United States issues a number of certifications linked to India and non-proliferation, coupled with a full report, "such as exempting the agreement from certain restrictions contained in the Atomic Energy Act; and submits to Congress of India-International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) agreement on safeguards for India's civilian nuclear programme."

### **Potential Threat to Balance of Power in the Region**

To put it another way, the US seeks a regional power balance that will allow it to retain its dominance in a unipolar world. If China and India can be brought into balance, the United States' dominance will continue uncontested. There is, however, more to the tale. The Indo-US strategic convergence would bolster Indian ambition because "India is sort of recreating unipolarity in its own way by seeking its own dominating position" in the region.

Furthermore, the United States wants India to emulate regional unipolarity. To deter or prevent China from engaging in destructive competition, the US organize nations on China's periphery to counterbalance Chinese strength. India may be a natural partner of the United States in the global system since it is a growing power with many inherent qualities, including a commitment to democracy. As a result, the US is more likely to develop a relationship with India and strengthen India's international influence. Indeed, some analysts, such as Mr. Tellies of the RAND Corporation, believe that granting India access to US nuclear material and technology would increase the likelihood of New Delhi assisting the United States in achieving its strategic objectives in the area. "It would reinforce India's potential usefulness as a buffer against a growing China, encourage it to adopt economic and geopolitical policies aligned with US interests, and influence its choices in terms of global energy stability."

Thus, the United States' tolerance of the Indian government's nuclear-power obsession may not lead to a long-term relationship with India.

Nonetheless, the strategic alliance will not prevent new power blocs from entering the region: one with a clear preference for India and the United States, and the other for China. As India pushes her new position more forcefully, such alliances are likely to grow. Indeed, the tone of India's foreign minister's recent remark regarding their smaller neighbors reveals signs of a large brotherly mentality. As US-India collaboration develops, South Asian neighbors will have to adapt to this new power situation.

On the other hand, this may have an impact on the US's regional multilateralism. Smaller India's neighbors may also find it difficult to adapt to the spillover impact of Indo-US collaboration. Indeed, the United States has declared unequivocally that it has dehyphenated its ties with India and Pakistan. In Indo-US relationship the DE hyphenation having a direct effect on and aggravating Pakistan's security situation. As a result, the Indo-US strategic alliance will have a direct impact on Pakistan's relationship with the United States.

### **Threats to the Stability of Indo-Pacific Region**

Not just in South Asia, but also in East Asia, the Indo-US alliance is jeopardizing strategic stability. The Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI), a lesser-known component of the Indo-US nuclear agreement, highlights the ensuing volatility. PSI is a component of the US notion of "coalitions of the willing," which subverts international law by allowing coalition members the authority to halt trade on the high seas and in international air space on the flimsy suspicion of the movement of destructive material or components. Many nations may face harassment as a result of this right. With PSI, India would be able to undertake military operations on the high seas without the need for a UN authorization. Apart from the US, India has consented to multinational military operations with the US without a UN authorization for the first time. This would alleviate US worries regarding non-proliferation regime supervision, since India may be requested to allow its Navy to operate more often alongside the US Navy in the Indo-Pacific. The US wants India to be an active participant in implementing the PSI, therefore these cooperative activities are mostly strategic. A nuclear agreement, according to Mr. Tellis, would "increase India's appetite for participating in counter-proliferation activities in the Indian Ocean." Despite the fact that the joint statement between India and the United States makes no direct reference of such collaboration, the true aim of this effort is exposed by the seemingly unsuitable subheading under which it appears: 'For Non-Proliferation and Security.' India is clearly seen as a regional manager aligned with the United States and growing in power in the Indo-Pacific Region.

### **Economic Implications for the Region**

The most significant predictor of Indian strength and stability is economic growth. The US-India strategic framework, on the other hand, prioritizes weapons sales, co-production, and military-to-military cooperation, and provides nothing to help India's economic prospects. according to most analysts, the most serious political-economic competition presented by China to the United States, India, and other nations is economic competition. In his regard,

the most important strategic assistance the US might provide India, is economic than military. In this respect, energy production, distribution, and efficiency seem critical.

Meanwhile, nuclear power is an essential part of India's long-term energy plan, although it's worth may or may not be justified. Nuclear energy development, on the other hand, will be a long, costly, and unpredictable process at best. Much more attention and support should be directed on providing India with faster and more efficient ways to fulfill its energy requirements. Because agriculture provides 60 percent of Indians' income, the United States' most important contribution to India's development would be to support trade rules and provide assistance to promote rural development and build social infrastructure to protect poor people as they migrate from the countryside to cities devoid of jobs, housing, and other resources. Many rural Indians lack access to electricity grids, but they also lack the well-paid and strong lobbyists that defence contractors and nuclear industry interests have recruited in Washington and New Delhi to push military sales and nuclear cooperation to the forefront of the US-India agenda.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Indo-US strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington has caused regional imbalance, hostility, and increased tensions in the region. The nuclear deal, nuclear commerce, military collaboration, and economic cooperation between the two countries have aggravated the unequal power balance, particularly between India and Pakistan. The US has always wanted to arm and help India, but its Indo-US cooperation appears to have been engineered to upset China and Pakistan. The long-term goal of the Indo-US alliance is to counter China, a "strategic rival," by requiring a strong India to act as a US proxy against China. This has led to India's strengthening since the Bush administration began arming it and the Obama administration has escalated it to unprecedented heights. The strategic alliance has benefited India through nuclear export regimes, but it has also endangered other South Asian nations, particularly Pakistan as a nuclear power. China has criticized Washington's support for Indian exceptionalism and has actively collaborated with Pakistan in several South Asian sectors to lessen Indo-US pressure on Pakistan. The strategic alliance has grown beyond the Pacific and has escalated tensions between Islamabad and Washington, causing instability in South Asia.

Sino-Pakistan collaboration was evident before the US-Pakistan conflict, with Beijing and Islamabad opposing Indo-US collaboration due to the US's lack of serving China's interests. The US's support for India in Afghanistan and the implied argument that only India can oppose Chinese hegemony demonstrate this. The solution to Indo-US cooperation is Pakistan-China cooperation, which strengthens the Pakistan-China friendship. The Greater Strategy is still alive and well in US-India cooperation, combining balance of power, national interests, exceptionalism and bilateralism, sovereignty, and hegemony.

The Indo-US nuclear agreement has paradoxical effects on South Asia and beyond, with India's ambitions to become a regional hegemon and US support for that goal tarnishing the pact and potentially engendering mistrust among

minor countries. The US-India 123 Agreement does not address these concerns, but it preserves and guarantees nuclear fuel supply while preventing India from becoming America's slave. The agreement also guarantees India's ability to negotiate a fuel supply contract with the IAEA, which could help India construct a strategic nuclear fuel reserve. However, the agreement's ambiguity between civil and military use raises concerns about its military implications.

### ADVANCED RESEARCH

Future research should further explore the long-term implications of the US-India strategic alliance on South Asian regional stability by incorporating empirical data and comparative case studies. Subsequent studies may examine how evolving geopolitical dynamics—such as China's expanding influence, shifting US foreign policy priorities, and emerging security architectures in the Indo-Pacific—reshape alliance behavior and regional power balances. Additionally, incorporating perspectives from smaller South Asian states would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how major power alignments affect regional foreign policy recalibrations, economic cooperation, and security strategies. Such research would contribute to a deeper and more nuanced assessment of alliance politics and regional realignments in South Asia.

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