

STRATEGIC STABILITY IN SOUTH ASIA: THE ROLE OF USA

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Abstract

The main focus of this paper revolves around the strategic stability of South Asia along with the US contributions in stabilizing the South Asian environment. It also highlights the Kashmir issue that is the constant source of conflict between the two leading countries of South Asia i.e., India and Pakistan. Post 9/11 era has seen many important developments impacting upon the existing contours of strategic stability in South Asia with U.S waging a war against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and coercing Pakistan to participate in it. Whereas relations between Pakistan and US worsened over time, this decade has seen a more strengthened US-India relationship. The current partnership between the two has far reaching implications for Pakistan's position and interests in the region. Some light has also been shed on the efficacy of Confidence Building Measures in dealing with regional conflicts and the involvement of great powers in South Asia. It is imperative that US being an influential power should continue to play a balanced and judicious role for the peace and stability of this region.

Introduction

Strategic stability implies a situation in which the chances of war eruption and emergence of a major crisis are deemed to be at minimum. While such a situation is a product of multiple factors and the concept itself is viewed as extremely complex; there are four elements that regularly contribute towards the sustainability of the situation and are considered relatively more significant than the others. They include; the absence of any ongoing major dispute, the absence of pronounced asymmetry in forces, existence of a large network of both conventional

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and military confidence building measures (CBMs) and an active but judicious role of the great powers in conflict prevention.

While South Asia is a region that has been experiencing periodic upheavals ever since the British departed and the countries of the region attained an independent status. Conflict and tension arose in South Asia mainly because of the hasty departure of the British who left many complicated and potentially explosive issues unresolved. The situation further complicated and exacerbated the existing sense of insecurity when the leading states of the region i.e., India and Pakistan, opted for divergent policy pursuits. In addition, the early linkage of regional interest with global developments not only cemented the adopted policies within the region but also periodically caused certain amount of adjustments among the involved powers like the USA, Soviet Union and China.

It needs to be mentioned here that the post 9/11 era has seen many important developments impacting upon the existing contours of strategic stability in South Asia. Not only did the US start a war against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan but it also managed to coerce Pakistan to participate in what is commonly referred in Pakistan as 'American War on Terror'. Equally significant development that radically influenced South Asian stability was the advent of Indo-US nuclear deal. The deal critically impacted upon the NPT regime on one hand and damaged the existing stability in South Asia on the other.

Regional Conflicts

Admittedly, there are many sources of tensions which have considerably contributed towards the perception formulation of South Asian states but perhaps the major contributions have come from the ongoing regional conflicts - more specifically from the Kashmir conflict. The ongoing Kashmir dispute is not only the major impediment on the road to normalization between India and Pakistan, but also the peace of South Asia is heavily dependent upon its resolution. No other dispute has generated so much ill will between the two countries as the Kashmir dispute. In addition, periodic pressures emanating from internal dynamics confronted them with ugly realities of *realpolitik* influencing them either to accelerate efforts to seek resolutions of the outstanding issues or face multiple complex problems. The externalization of internal problems periodically did provide temporary relief, but in essence it further complicated the existing complex problems requiring even more careful handling.

Even after the passage of 64 years, not only does the Kashmir dispute still continue to occupy a paramount position in Indo-Pak relations but it has also become abundantly clear that without its resolution, the peace of South Asia would continue to remain an elusive commodity. To comprehend properly the impact of unresolved Kashmir dispute upon the

peace of South Asia, one needs to understand all shades of the ongoing Kashmir dispute, including the approaches, dialogue, multilateral and bilateral efforts, factors causing slow or lack of progress on this core issue and impact on regional peace.

The seeds of the Kashmir dispute were sown at the time of the partition of the subcontinent and British Viceroy Louis Mountbatten's role in securing accession of most of the princely states to India, where he blatantly disregarded his self-asserted principles governing the process of partition. Technically, the power to accede to one or the other of the new dominions was vested in the personal decision of the ruler but it was also recognized that the decision of the ruler should be governed by considerations of geographic contiguity to one of the dominions, composition of the population and above all, by the wishes of the people. India insisted upon grabbing Junagadh and Hyderabad, because of the Hindu majority population in these states, despite the fact that the ruler of Junagadh opted for Pakistan and the ruler of Hyderabad preferred independent status. By this criterion, Kashmir should have automatically joined Pakistan. But in the case of Kashmir, India applied a different criterion and managed to secure accession letter signed by the ruler. Once the Maharajah had supposedly signed the instrument of accession, India relegated the principles of self-determination and geographic contiguity to a secondary position and pushed the legalistic approach to the forefront.

Compared to India, Pakistan has been extremely consistent in its Kashmir policy. With the passage of time, India has changed its tactics. For both sides, Kashmir dispute is a complex issue that has exercised overwhelming influence over their policies since partition. For India, the intensified freedom struggle of the Kashmiris is often termed as a Pakistani-inspired pursuit rather than a genuine expression of Kashmiris' desire for self-determination. For Pakistan, Kashmir has become a symbol of Indian highhandedness and broken pledges. All Pakistan wants and insists is that the people of Kashmir are allowed to exercise their right of self-determination under a UN supervised plebiscite in accordance with the resolutions of August 13, 1948 and January 5, 1949. The uprising in the 1990's and the current struggle are not only viewed as the expression of extreme discontentment of the Kashmiri people but also a renewed assertion to secure their legitimate and promised right of self-determination.

It is intriguing that many Pakistanis and Azad Kashmiris accuse the Pakistani leadership, for not doing even the basic minimum in the area of supplying weapons or providing the training, whereas the Indians tend to over-credit the Pakistanis for this.

Compared to India, which has systematically eroded the special status of Kashmir it gave to the State under the Article 370 of its constitution, Pakistan did not absorb either the Northern Areas or the Azad Kashmir. However, it needs to be mentioned here that Northern Areas have recently been given a special status and are now called the Gilgit-Baltistan region. Determined not to allow Kashmir's possible accession to Pakistan and to retain it as a part of the Indian Union, India undertook series of well-calculated moves to initially erode the special status it gave to Kashmir and then merge the state completely into the Indian Union.¹ British surrender of their impartial role in partition processes facilitated the Indians to gain the necessary foothold, initially.²

Over the last 20 years, Pakistan has successfully managed to internationalize the Kashmir dispute. A three pronged approach adopted by Pakistan facilitated the process of internationalization. To begin with, Pakistan allowed the local as well as the international press including the Indian media to cover the consequences of the crisis on the Pakistani side of the LoC. All interested visitors and human right activists are still allowed to visit AJK and interview the unfortunate victims of the crisis. The second aspect of this approach revolved around the Pakistani government's efforts to place and highlight the dispute before a number of international organizations including NAM, OIC, and UNHCR etc. The third aspect was to send delegations consisting of parliamentarians, thinkers, analysts and journalists to various countries with a view to educate those governments. The establishment of Kashmir Committee was another development, which did contribute enormously towards Pakistan's Kashmir policy.

Five other factors somewhat inadvertently facilitated the process of internationalization of the dispute. First, many research organizations, foundations, institutes and universities all over the world began to hold seminars and conferences on the Kashmir crisis. Second, many Kashmiri people living outside South Asia began to step-up their efforts to educate the public in those countries. Third, many marches were organized to cross the LOC over the last 20 years, which in turn, accelerated the process of internationalization. Fourth, the negative attitude of the Indian government with regard to opening up Kashmir for all journalists and representatives of various human rights groups further facilitated the process of internationalization of the dispute. It needs to be stressed here that the Indian government has adopted a policy under which a select group of journalists and other representatives are allowed to visit

¹ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "India's Kashmir Policy", *Perspectives on Kashmir* (Islamabad: Pakistan Forum, 1994): 97-118.

² Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "The Politics of the Punjab Boundary Award", *Heidelberg paper No.1* (Heidelberg: South Asia Institute, University of Heidelberg, Germany): September 2000.

Kashmir. Fifth, and perhaps the most important development that made inadvertent contributions towards the internationalization of the dispute, was the acquisition of nuclear weapon status by both India and Pakistan. Soon after Indian nuclear tests on 11th and 13th May, 1998, the Indian leaders such as Advani began to issue threatening statements.

Compared to Pakistan's successful pursuit of internationalization of the dispute, India tried to paint Pakistani pursuits as efforts directed to highlight the Islamic character of the dispute. Indeed, these were crude attempts to divert the attention from the real issues by employing terms like International Islamic Mujahideen to generate the impression of some kind of Islamic conspiracy continuously working against the established order.

Two set of approaches towards Kashmir exist; first is the military and political approach and second entails bilateral and multilateral routes. The Kashmir dispute is essentially a political dispute requiring a political approach if the parties involved are genuinely interested in resolving it. Until the advent of recent peace process in 2004, India opted to employ a military approach. While the freedom fighters claim that they have been compelled to take up arms by the state governments' and India's policies, the Indian government opted for military approach right from the outset of the crisis. Not only had Kashmir remained under Governor's/President's rule for quite sometimes, half-hearted attempts to introduce political approach were also made periodically. Whenever Indian efforts to employ political approach failed, they immediately accused Pakistan rather than looking inward.

The government of Pakistan has frequently expressed its willingness for a dialogue focused on Kashmir exclusively. The Kashmiri umbrella organization, All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) also repeatedly expressed its willingness to talk to the Indian government but India's negativism effectively impeded any progress in this direction. During the earlier periods of the dispute, US actively made substantive contributions towards its resolution. Dr. Frank P. Graham, a former US senator from North Carolina, worked as a United Nations representative after Sir Owen Dixon, and submitted no less than five reports to the UN reflecting his endeavors to find a satisfactory formula for the demilitarization of Kashmir.³ With the passage of few more years not only US began to drift away from the dispute but also the UN began to lose interest, though on the UN records it is still one of the oldest unresolved disputes.

³ Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy 1946-1990*(Karachi: Oxford University Press, Third Edition 2001), 175-176 and Josef Korbel, *Danger in Kashmir* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, Second Edition 2005), 182-189.

Following the acquisition of nuclear weapons by both India and Pakistan in 1998 and the subsequent emergence of Kargil episode, President Clinton demonstrated interest in resolving the dispute but did not make any significant effort. The 21st Century saw the strengthening of US-India relations. In its efforts to woo India and make it a bulwark against China, it even went to the extent of recognizing India as a nuclear weapons state indirectly. It signed a nuclear deal with India disregarding its own preventive laws and influenced Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to pass an India-specific amendment in order to accommodate Indian interests. President Obama, during his electioneering campaign, also recognized the need to resolve the dispute, but once elected as President he totally ignored the plight of the people of Kashmir.

Growing Force Asymmetry

Undoubtedly, the South Asians' regional perceptions have always been and still are greatly influenced by the imbalanced and asymmetric power structure that emerged after the departure of the British. The tyranny of geography manifested itself in such a way that while almost all the regional states acquired common border with India, they do not enjoy physical proximity among themselves. India is situated right in the middle of the region, blessed with large territory, massive population, endowed with enormous resources, and over the years it has built an impressive military machine. The towering Indian position in the region, coupled with India's assertion to secure recognition and respect for its policies and its desire to establish a natural hierarchy; or as many often refer to it as hegemony, within the region generate apprehensions among the regional neighbours.⁴

Despite having accorded high priority to defense sector in terms of resource allocation, Pakistan continued to face the undesired level of asymmetry in defense forces right from the beginning. While the resource allocation in terms of a percentage of the GDP to defense sector in Pakistan has been always higher than the allocation in India, the asymmetry in actual number of troops and weapons continue to grow primarily because of India's large economy and its desire to play a role of major power in international politics. The high priority to defense in Pakistan was the product of three factors; perceived threats from India, inabilities of

⁴ Almost all Pakistani governments have opposed Indian policies aimed at the establishment of its regional hegemony. Recently the current Pakistani Foreign Minister Hina RabbaniKhar, in response to US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's assertion that India should lead Asia, have once again assterted that Pakistan won't accept Indian hegemony and stressed that "Pakistan's role in the region is by no means inferior to India",*The News*(Lahore),July 25, 2011.

resources managers to suggest alternatives, and the high level of influence the armed forces enjoyed.⁵

Asymmetry has been on the rise, especially during the last two decades. Already India has built a huge military machine with the 'world's third largest army, fourth largest air force and fifth largest navy'.⁶ India, as compared to Pakistan, maintains more than double the armed forces but has also been indulging in a shopping spree of sophisticated weaponry (total armed forces of India and Pakistan are respectively 1,325,000 and 617,000).⁷ Pakistan's Army consists of 550,000 personnel, Navy 22000, Air Force 45000 whereas India maintains 1,129,900 strong Army, Navy 58,350, and Air Force 127,200.⁸

Realistic analysis reveals that the asymmetry appears to be more pronounced in navy and air force than in armies. Indian quest for a blue water navy with a large fleet of high performance submarines along with anti-submarines frigates, guided missiles and short-range ballistic and cruise missiles have generated apprehensions for Pakistan. The danger of naval blockade of Karachi; Pakistan's main port, is viewed with utmost concern. Pakistan's long neglect of navy and India's concerted and continuous efforts to build its navy has widened the existing gap in naval capabilities. Recent reports suggest that India plans to spend around US \$100 billion on the planned acquisition of sophisticated weapons over the next few years.

Similarly, the growing superiority of Indian Air Force has invoked concerns among the Pakistanis though Pakistan's possession of wide range of sophisticated missiles, which can effectively engage Indian Air Force, has injected an element of confidence among the Pakistanis. But India's continuous efforts to procure advanced combat aircraft, deep surveillance capabilities and supersonic cruise missiles consistently invoke concerns in Pakistan, especially if viewed within the context of India's intentions of waging a limited war.⁹ Recently pronounced Indian doctrine of 'Cold Start' lends credibility to Pakistan's perception of Indian intentions.¹⁰

⁵ For details see *RCSS Policy Studies 10* entitled Defence Expenditure in South Asia: An Overview, by Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Jasjit Singh, (Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, 2000), 44-45.

⁶ Zafar Iqbal Cheema, *Indian Nuclear Deterrence* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 437-451.

⁷ See *The Military Balance 2010* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010), 359-364 and 367-370.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Michael Kripon, Rodney Jones and Zaid Haider (eds), *Limited War, Escalation Control and the Nuclear Options in South Asia* (Washington DC: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2004), 10.

¹⁰ Cold Start is viewed as modification of the pre-emptive air strikes against Pakistan's air force or nuclear facilities. 'Cold Start focuses on Indian integrated battle groups with elements of army, navy and IAF as thrust

Given the existence of a major dispute and a rapidly increasing asymmetry in the armed forces, it is not too difficult to assume that the greater the conventional military asymmetry between India and Pakistan, the lower will be the nuclear threshold. While India has every right to acquire whatever it deems fit to strengthen its armed forces, the growing asymmetry is extremely prone to inject instability in South Asia and could encourage an undesired arms race. Invariably, increase in Indian defense allocation provides sufficient justification for most Pakistanis to seek a raise in defense allocations.¹¹

Undoubtedly, the main reason that influenced the Pakistani decision makers to opt for the acquisition of nuclear weapons' capability was to enable Pakistan to effectively ward off threats emanating from India.¹² Following the dismemberment of Pakistan in 1971 by India, Pakistan started thinking seriously about acquiring nuclear weapon capability. Deterring India from embarking upon another major military adventure appears to be the main motivating factor for acquiring nuclear weapons. In some ways, 'Pakistan's nuclear deterrence could also be classified as an instrument for deterring the conventional war'.¹³ Since there is great asymmetry in conventional capability between the two countries, it is not too farfetched to assume that a large scale conventional attack by India may force Pakistan to employ the nuclear weapons.

Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)

The Confidence Building Measures imply 'any action, any development, any measure, any arrangement, any understanding, any agreement or any treaty that generates confidence between the adversaries' and enables them to initiate negotiations and resolve the issue/dispute amicably.¹⁴ While there are many categories of the CBMs; communication, transparency, consultation, goodwill, and advance notification measures are relatively better known than the others. Sometimes CBMs are classified into military and non-military terms. The

formations undertaking deep strikes against Pakistan, yet limed enough not to invite any nuclear retaliation'. See Zafar Iqbal Cheema, Ibid.460.

¹¹ Ibid , *Defense Expenditure in South Asia: An Overview*, 45.

¹² Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema , Anatomizing Psakistan's Motivation for Nuclear Weapons, *Pakistan Horizon*, (Karachi: April , 2011, Vol. 64, No.2): 5-19.

¹³ Tariq Mahmud Ashraf , Nuclearization and the External Dimensions of South Asian Strategic Stability, *Pakistan Security Research Unit*, Brief Number 26, (Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford), January 24, 2008.

¹⁴ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "CBMs and South Asia", *Confidence Building Measures in South Asia* edited by Dipankar Banerjee, (Regional Centre for Strategic Studies, Colombo, Sri Lanka), 1999, 29-40.

CBMs exist in almost all regions of the world and South Asia is one of those regions that have a substantive number of CBMs in place.

The existence of a large network of CBMs invariably helps in reducing tensions and facilitating the estranged parties towards constructive engagement. Confidence building is not really a new phenomenon in South Asia particularly between India and Pakistan. Since the partition of the subcontinent till today, both India and Pakistan have signed many agreements aimed at generating confidence and reducing tensions. Among them, perhaps the most notable are the Liaquat Nehru Pact-1951 (dealing with minorities), the Indus Waters Treaty-1960, the Tashkent Agreement-1966, the Rann of Kutch Agreement-1968, the Shimla Accord-1972, the Salal Dam Agreement-1978, the Joint Commission-1983, the Lahore Declaration-1999 and the Joint Statement following the 12th SAARC Summit 2004. It is important to note that with the exception of the Joint Commission, Lahore Declaration and the Joint Statement of 2004, all of them were the product of either a crisis or a war that necessitated a logical end to the preceding developments.¹⁵

Undoubtedly, the advent of CBMs have improved and ameliorated the overall situation but they have not paid the expected level of dividends. Many reasons account for this less than satisfactory situation. Many factors exist that are continuously applying breaks to the efficacy of the existing CBMs. Some of them are; the on-going Kashmir dispute along with the recently emerging water-related issues, existence of distrust continuously enforced by mutual perceptions and negative images, too much weight attached to military related CBMs, and the inability of both to fully adhere to the spirit of the CBMs. After all, they did work effectively in Europe but failed to pay similar contributions in South Asia. Admittedly the track record of the CBMs in South Asia is not very impressive but this does not mean that they made no contributions at all.

No student of South Asia is likely to underestimate the negative contributions made by the on-going Kashmir dispute and they all stress that peace in South Asia cannot be achieved without resolving this dispute. The Kashmir dispute has effectively prevented progress on many other solvable issues. Unless the Kashmir dispute is resolved; either by using the old framework of UN or arriving at bilaterally - negotiated settlement as suggested in the Shimla Agreement of 1972 or evolving a new framework in which the Kashmiri representatives are also made party to the process, the negative attitudes would continue to effectively impede any substantive progress towards its resolution.

It is sometimes stressed in some quarters that 'according to maximum respect to agreed principles and agreement does not seem very common in South Asia' and in consequence one finds many divergent

¹⁵ Ibid.

interpretations which, in many ways, 'facilitates strengthening of non-compliance and non-adherence'.¹⁶

Different opinions over the efficacy of CBMs exist in South Asia with some crediting them with success while others with failure. The advocates of CBMs who over-credited the efficacy and expected CBMs to resolve all the complex problems of South Asia must have been disappointed. But those having a realistic view saw them merely as means of improving the atmosphere in order to open all channels of communication and provide various options to their respective governments.

In case of South Asia, nuclear weapons are linked with the ongoing bitter regional disputes exacerbating the chances for instability. However, perhaps the most redeeming feature is that in many cases the outsiders' involvement has been extremely helpful especially that of the US.

Great Powers' Involvement in South Asia

A great powers' involvement in any region of the world is primarily influenced by two major reasons; either to meet its global responsibilities or to serve its own interests in a given region. The involvement of the great powers during the Cold War was primarily the product of their global objectives. During the Cold War, the Americans perceived threats from the Communist world and were feverishly engaged in enlisting players, friends and supporters for their own team. Similarly, the Soviets were also busy in efforts to strengthen their side

Both the Americans and the Soviets were introduced to South Asia by Pakistan and India respectively, each seeking to satisfy its perceived security requirements. Pakistan's sense of insecurity brought the Americans to South Asia and quick Indian reaction to this development provided an opportunity to the Soviets to step into South Asia. Both the superpowers got themselves quickly involved in the South Asian cobweb and did not pay any attention to the existing level of mutual hostilities and nature of conflict relationship between India and Pakistan. The presence of superpowers thus introduced the Cold War to South Asia.

Both the American and the Soviets offered all kinds of incentives to lure countries to their side including alliance partnership and military aid to many countries. The major countries of South Asia, India and Pakistan were also offered military assistance. Apprehensive of Indian intentions to undo Pakistan and lacking in military hardware, the Pakistanis accepted the American offer. The Indians, on the other hand, refused. Prior to its

¹⁶ Ibid. and Michael Krepon, "A Time of Trouble, A Time of Need" in *Crisis Prevention, Confidence Building and Reconstruction in South Asia*, (ed). Michael Krepon and Amit Sevak, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995), 1-10.

refusal, India vehemently condemned American military aid offer to Pakistan and even requested 'many friendly governments to intercede with Washington in order to stop the proposed military aid'.¹⁷ The Indian Prime Minister 'Nehru even went to the extent of suggesting, in exchanges with representatives of Commonwealth countries, that if the USA persisted in its policy of arming Pakistan, India might be forced to look towards the Soviet Union for arms'.¹⁸ Reacting hastily the Indians did not waste much time and invited the Soviet leaders to visit India in 1955. The Soviet leaders not only visited India in 1955 but also delivered speeches that were reflective of biting criticism of Pakistan for having joined American sponsored defense alliance.

Throughout 1950s, both the superpowers continued to strengthen their relationships with the South Asian states. It was not until the advent of 1960s that dramatic changes such as the introduction of intercontinental missiles, thaw in the Cold War and Sino-Indian war of 1962 influenced the regional states to review their policies. Despite warnings and protests of the Pakistani leaders, the West (US and UK) rushed arms aid in response to Indian request following the Sino-Indian war of 1962. Pakistan, disenchanted with West, began to drift away and started searching for new friends in order to maintain balance vis-à-vis India. China responded positively to Pakistan's search for new friends and allies. The Soviet Union, realizing that Pakistan's sense of insecurity might push them too deeply into the Chinese lap, began to seek ways to impede Pakistan's growing friendship with China and simultaneously weaken its pro-West policy. While the Soviets began to cautiously smile at Pakistan, they continued to strengthen their ties with India. Towards the end of the 1960s the Soviet cautious smile also vanished following the rejection of Brezhnev's proposal of an Asian Collective security system by the Pakistani President. While Pakistan's relations with China continued to strengthen, the relations with US continued to deteriorate especially after the American arms embargo in 1965.

Following the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, the Pakistani leaders refrained from overtly criticizing the Soviet role in the separation of East Pakistan and began to mend fences with the Soviets. Initially the Soviets

¹⁷ Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, *Pakistan's Defence Policy, 1947-58*, (London: The Macmillan Press Ltd, 1990), 127-28. James W. Spain, Military Assistance for Pakistan, *American Political Science Review*, (September, 1954, Vol. xlvii 1948, No. 30), 738-51. During the last week of December 1953 India circulated a memorandum to friendly governments in the Middle East and Commonwealth setting forth its objections to American military assistance for Pakistan.

¹⁸ Cheema, *ibid.* The *New York Times* (New York), December 15, 1953 issue reported that '*the Soviet Ambassador in Delhi at the time discussed with Nehru the possibility of the sale of military equipment to India if the USA remained determined to arm Pakistan.*'

were somewhat cool towards Pakistani overtures but gradually began to open up and by late 1970s, relations with the Soviets considerably improved. Disenchanted with the Americans especially after 1962, 1965 and 1971 let-downs, Pakistan decided to gradually withdraw from western alliances.¹⁹

It is not too far-fetched to assume that over the years significant developments could disillusion the alliance partners, and in consequence some may even decide to withdraw from the alliance and begin to revise their foreign policy pursuits or may decide to continue to retain membership with some expressed concerns and reservations. Some even decided to continue without any reservations, depending upon the interpretation and requirement of the prevailing situation. Modification and revision of policies is somewhat inevitable after the advent of some major developments both at the international and regional levels.

Many dramatic changes have taken place over the last twenty years which have radically altered world scene. Not only did the end of the Cold War plunge the great powers to adjust to new situation and to evolve policies to meet the emerging realities but also the developments of September 11 (2001) gave birth to a new form of groupings such as international coalition to combat terrorism.

The departure of the Cold War gave birth to prominent trends: integrative and disintegrative trend and second was the ascendancy of economic imperatives. Not only did the European Union and ASEAN gradually evolved into a larger grouping of states but countries like Soviet Union and Yugoslavia disintegrated. However an even more important trend was the ascendancy of economic factors. During the Cold War, the political imperatives were governing the relations between the nations while the economic imperatives were relegated to a secondary position. The new post-Cold War era has seen the reversal of governing imperatives. However in the case of South Asia, the policy seems to be a combination of both economic and political imperatives.

The post 9/11 era has been gradually witnessing transformation in U.S's South Asian policy. The new American South Asian policy is also the product of radical transformation in the global environment. The Bush administration's South Asian policy revolved around 'India First' approach. The US nuclear deal with India and subsequent efforts to secure

¹⁹ Following the Sino-Indian war of 1962, US rushing aid to India without consulting Pakistan despite having promised to Pakistan that before sending aid it would consult Pakistan was viewed by many Pakistanis as a let down. Second let down was when US imposed arms embargo on both India and Pakistan in 1965 in pursuit of what it called an even-handed policy. Since Pakistan was heavily dependent upon US arms and Indian arms dependence was extremely limited, many Pakistanis interpreted it as another let down. Third let down was when US failed to come to Pakistan's assistance in 1971 war despite Soviet involvement in 1971 Indo-Pak war.

India-specific amendment in the NSG rules is indeed reflective of US's new approach to South Asia. While many in Pakistan view it as a major break from the past in which India was a dependable friend of the Soviets whereas Pakistan was a loyal American ally, it needs to be recalled that even during the Cold War the American efforts to befriend India never ceased. Some analysts even believe that the Americans were using the Pakistanis to lure India out of the lap of the Soviets. A comparative analysis of the economic assistance given to India during the Cold War era and the total assistance extended to Pakistan in the same period clearly point towards 'option retention' policy. This is not surprising as all nations tend to work out a long list of favorable options.

Each nation has a right to adjust its policies in congruence with the dictates of its own national interests but the global powers also have responsibilities to promote peace and stability in conflict prone areas. No global power would be in a position to contribute towards peace unless it opts for a neutral and balanced approach. Perhaps that is why Americans have not been successful in securing peace in the Middle East or South Asia. Just as many supporters of India described the American policy during the Cold War as unbalanced, there is no reason to believe that the current policy is balanced.

Conclusion

While there is no doubt that growing asymmetry in conventional capability could easily impinge upon the incumbent fragile stability, two other factors also need to be mentioned; India's aggressive posturing, and the American tilt towards India. India's aggressive posturing has manifested in two pronounced developments; India's notion of limited war, and its Cold Start doctrine. Similarly, the American role in South Asia has also generated many concerns. Essentially the US has been playing the role of a conflict manager and has not devoted much effort towards the conflict resolution. Hopes were raised by President Obama's statements regarding the India-Pakistan conflict-resolution prior to his election but the subsequent change in his policy towards South Asia clearly reflected his main electioneering slogan - Change. The American dilemma is how to strengthen and maintain strategic partnership with India and also keep Pakistan on its right side as it is viewed as the most important country in the War on Terror, especially within the Afghanistan context. Viewed from the American perspective, both are regarded important partners as both could facilitate the attainment of different objectives.

While the Indo-US nuclear deal and subsequent India-specific amendment in the NSG rules merely reflect US efforts to facilitate and strengthen India, it has not seriously looked at the adverse implications of the US policies for Pakistan. India has not only become arrogant in recent years, but has also become much more intransigent in its attitude

towards regional neighbours and has been dictating terms. May be it is the lure of its large market along with its strong economy that has effectively influenced the policies of many industrialized countries. But the role of a great power entails judicious approaches towards the regional actors. The US needs to balance its role in the region incongruence with its global responsibilities.

During the last two decades, India and Pakistan have experienced four major crises. Apart from the first two crises (Brass-tacks in 1987, and Kashmir crisis of 1990), the Americans played an effective role in defusing the loaded situations and effectively prevented the undesired drift towards clashes. Both the Kargil crisis (1999) and Troops Confrontation (2001-2002) were viewed with utmost seriousness. In both crises, 'the United States acted as an Umpire, called the shots as it saw them and forcing one side to back down'.²⁰ 'The degree of Washington's involvement has varied across these crises, ranging from the despatch of a mission in 1990 to high level official visits to both India and Pakistan in 2001-2'.²¹

Compared to US, the policies of China and Soviet/Russia are viewed in relative terms as more consistent. The American policies towards South Asia have changed in accordance with the passage of time and emerging realities. They have fluctuated from decade to decade. During the 1950s, the emphasis was upon the containment of perceived Communist expansionism and 1960s saw the advent of an era of co-existence which eventually facilitated to the emergence of détente. The 1970s witnessed gradual normalization of relations between US and China but the 1980s experienced the Afghanistan crisis. Towards the end of the 1989, the global situation began to change. The ascent of Gorbachev, followed by his introduction of *Perestroika* and *Glasnost* coupled with positive Western responses not only brought an end to the Cold War but also initiated a new era of cautious cooperation. The 1990s saw adjustment of nations to a Cold War-free world. The first decade of the 21st century was dominated by the War on Terror in general and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in particular.

To secure a stable South Asia, it is indeed imperative that the U.S. continues to play a role of conflict manager which implies calculated support for India. Simultaneously, efforts should also be directed to arrest the widening of distrust between Pakistan and U.S. The Pakistani suspicions have been continuously multiplying since the signing of Indo-U.S. nuclear deal and by the U.S. refusal to offer a similar deal to Pakistan has further heightened the level of suspicions. In addition, the policy of Af-Pak generated the impression that Pakistan and Afghanistan are treated at

²⁰ P.R.Chari, Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema and Stephen P.Cohen, *Four Crises and a Peace Process: American Engagement in South Asia*, (Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2007 and Harper Collins, Delhi, 2008), 191-194.

²¹ Ibid.

par which did not go down well among the Pakistanis. Even the Kerry-Lugar-Burman aid package was unable to inject the desired level of confidence among Pakistanis. The inability of the U.S. to make visible efforts to resolve the Kashmir dispute and the undesired verbal exchange of accusations following the killing of Osama bin Laden between the leaders of Pakistan and the US have also taken a heavy toll of existing goodwill. The unprovoked attack on Salala check-post by the NATO helicopters further exacerbated the situation. It would be appropriate for the U.S., being an influential country to take the initiative and inject confidence building measures.

Not only are both India and Pakistan fully cognizant of American capabilities of a judicious umpire, it is imperative that the US should continue to play such a role in order to secure the desired strategic stability in South Asia. Without the US playing an active role, the stability of South Asia may become an elusive commodity.

