

Indo-US Relations: Indo-US Nuclear Deal and Its Impact

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Abstract

National security and national interests, in terms of realist premises, are the core value for every nations whether it is big power or small power in international system. Security and defense strategy of the US and India after the Cold War has been significantly outlined the importance of national interests in The "Strategic Partnership" pursued by the US Administration under the President Bush in 2004 was remarkably a turning point in Indo-US relations. Progressively, Obama-Modi relations is also supportive to 2005 Indo-US Nuclear Deal though the US Congress and India opposition groups harshly criticized on the implementation of the Deal under internationally recognized measures and standards. India and Pakistan, the rival regional power in south Asia are, in fact, unilaterally withdrew from Non Nuclear Proliferation (NPT) as signatories after 2010 missile tests. The US together with European Union imposed sanction on both India and Pakistan for nuclear missile tests. Here, it is necessary understand the security and defense priority of both countries is to be observed based on mutual national interests. It also needs to study major factors that force India and the US to continue strategic partnership under the context of Indian Ocean Region (IOR). At least, it hopes to learn lessons from 2005 Indo-US Nuclear Deal negotiation of India and the US in context of civilian purpose nuclear technology in country development.

Key words: Foreign policy, security strategy, defense, Indian Ocean Region, Indo-US nuclear deal, 123 agreement, Indo-US relations

I. Introduction

This paper aims to highlight the importance of negotiation on national security of India which is also significant to national development, the civilian nuclear development. The US as a member of NPT tightly hold the guidelines and safeguard mechanism concerning military purpose nuclear plant establishment but stand in permitting civilian purpose nuclear plants in those countries who would like to establish the nuclear energy for electrical and medical purpose. India, the long partner of the former Soviet Union, attempted to upgrade its existing nuclear plants under the safeguard mechanism of IAEA which encountered with the provisions of NPT, 123 Nuclear Agreement, IAEA and its protocols for nearly one decade. Finally, the organizational attempt and skillful diplomats of India overcome the tough stand of US Congress and Indian Congress as well. It also aims to observe the how India attempted to conclude civilian purpose nuclear plant deal even though India worked out from NPT when Indo-Pak rivalry was intense in the late 1990s. The references used in this paper are the Congress Reports written by the Indian experts in the US for the Congressional Research Service, the books written by Indian experts on nuclear technology and Indian Think Tank and references written by third party researchers who are experts on Indo-US and Indo-Pak relations. The method applied to this paper is descriptive method to observe the detailed facts of Indo-US Nuclear Deal. The scientific findings of this papers include the importance of nuclear energy as national interests and national security of every countries including both the US and India in the current situations amidst the importance of human security. Moreover, the diplomatic negotiation skill and domestic political scenes are the determining

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factors to reach to the safeguard mechanism upon which the US Congress stands on strict technical adherence and stand.

II. Foreign Policy Choices of the US and India

Foreign policy shift of India and the US

India needs the US and vice versa to project influence in Asia as major global power. India geographically and strategically dominates typically in South Asia. Its rapidly increasing economy, pluralist society, cultural influence in Asia and its huge budget in military security are the major attentions from the world, especially, the US which saw India as a rising partner in Asia during the Clinton and Bush Administration. President Bush saw India as a reliable and important partner in Asia in 2004. In this context, some foreign policy analysts argued that China's rapid rise motivated the attention of the US foreign policy attention to India in the 21st Century.¹ India became the US strategic partner especially after inking the ten-year defense framework in 2005 to facilitate bilateral military and security cooperation. The US-India partnership became strengthened due to combined and joint military exercise, bilateral intelligent cooperation and counterterrorism in the late 2000s. After 2005, the US has been the major arm seller to India.

More US interests focused on South Asia when the US wanted to secure its interest and forces in Afghanistan. The US also emphasized the Indo-Pak issue Kashmir region as a cross-border terrorism which is crucial for US forces in Afghanistan. Therefore, the US strongly endorsed and encouraged India and Pakistan on India-Pakistan Peace Initiative.² It also expressed its concern on potential conflicts and hostilities between India and Pakistan who possessed nuclear arms and long range missiles. In this context, the US sought to curtail the proliferation of nuclear weapons and missiles in South Asia.

The US-India relations was waned though India's geostrategic, economic and security circumstances. India felt skepticism over US global and regional role after 2008. Bilateral relations had been largely constrained by differences over the US- Pakistan alliance after 9/11 attack. India was apparently reluctant to insert power in its regional context. Subsequently, President Obama envisaged India as special partner of the US. Unfortunately, both had domestic issues like federal budget issues in the US and grand corruption scandal in India. Both had to focus their own domestic challenges between 2008 and 2011. However, New Delhi viewed the engagement with the US as its highest foreign policy priority. The reason was that India needed the US support in its four long term foreign policy objectives - a stable Afghanistan-Pakistan region, exerting influence across the Indian Ocean Region, obtaining status as rule maker in international system and sustaining global power factors³ such as sustained economic growth and military modernization.⁴ Before President Obama, the US administration successively endorsed Japan as an only partner for the UNSC permanent seat.

India's political prominence in South Asia has been matched by a rapid expansion of US-India Strategic Partnership which was an engagement and actually began in the President Clinton administration. Now the US viewed India through the larger prism of Asia. As the

¹ K. Alan Kronstadt & Others: *India: Domestic Issue, Strategic Dynamic and the US Relations, Congressional Research Report (R33529)*, Washington DC, 1 September 2011, No page (Hereafter this work will be referred to as Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*)

² Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*, p.1

³ Ibid, p.3

⁴ Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*, p.3

US coped with impact of rising China on Asia, India is increasingly seen as a critical part of America's broader Asia strategy.⁵ At the same time, India government has been seeking in partnership with Washington.

It was cleared that international alignment emerged both military alliance and trade partnership which centered on the US. In Asia, China has long been loosely aligned with Pakistan in opposition to India which was aligned with the Soviet Union throughout the Cold War. The US tended to favor the Pakistan side as well. But, both US-India and US-Chinese relations had improved since the Cold War ended.⁶ Although India was the world's largest democracy, it faced challenges at home and abroad in the past sixty years. It fought war against China and Pakistan, which possessed nuclear weapons and its two largest neighbors in Asia. After 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai, India blamed Pakistan as home for Islamic militant groups and Indian hostilities against China had cooled but China remained a major rival in region while maintaining competing claim over territory.

Like India, China increasingly became large economically and militarily as well. China attempted to exert strong leadership in Asia. In 2006, India increased its ties with China and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh personally visited China to open discussion on future trade and military cooperation. In December 2007, the two largest armies in the world, India and China held joint military exercise.⁷

Again, Islamabad involvement in Afghanistan was a major cause for India policy shift to reinforce its cooperation with the US in South Asia conflict. India started to notice the provocative anti-India policy pursued by Pakistan in Afghanistan especially in case of reconciliation between Karzai's government and militant Taliban groups in Afghanistan reconciliation. It was a shadow war between India and Pakistan over Afghanistan while India opened numbers of its consulates in Kabul and along Afghanistan-Pakistan border particularly along the Baluchistan Province in Pakistan. Expulsion of diplomats and staff of consulates between two countries was not new and diplomatic expulsion was a means of retaliation for India and Pakistan which always accused New Delhi's involvement and interference in western border region of Pakistan closed to Afghanistan. Conversely, India claimed that it reiterated its wishes to support Afghan-led reconciliation process without interference or coercion of other.⁸ These underlying factors cause India to increase and maintain its effort to scaling back in the hope of easing Pakistani insecurities in Afghanistan. It was a costly for India in its foreign policy shift in Afghanistan. India pledged to provide US \$ 450 million for Afghanistan reconstruction in 2008.⁹

However, Pakistan's primary goal was to prevent India dominant role in Afghan and India was also suspicious about the US encouragement to the Afghan officials to deal with Taliban. Sometimes the US also criticized that high profile of India involvement in Afghanistan which caused difficulties in Afghan efforts on reconciliation with Taliban because India also felt uneasy on US-led Afghan reconciliation and coalition with Taliban in future Afghan government. India did not want Afghan as anti-India Taliban administration so that it reportedly agreed the US military presence in Afghan.

⁵ *Asian Views on America's Role in Asia; The Future of the Rebalance*, the Asia Foundation, New York, p. 2 (Hereafter this work will be referred to as *The Asian Views*)

⁶ Joshua S Goldstein & Jon C Pevehouse: *International Relations*, 10th Edition, London, 2012, p. 70 (Hereafter this work will be referred to as Goldstein & Pevehouse: *International Relations*)

⁷ Goldstein & Pevehouse: *International Relations*, p. 72

⁸ Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*, p.20

⁹ Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*, p. 21

China in Asia was another actor to shift foreign policy of the US and India. Rising potential strategic rival between India and China, India influence in Tibet, Beijing's encirclement to Indian Ocean, India's eyeing on vast region from Persian Gulf to South China Sea and the US containment on China in the Pacific and Indian Oceans are the major factor for Indo-US relations in Asia. China support to Pakistani economy and military is also a frustration for India.¹⁰ In this context, democracy boom in India becomes leverage for the US in Asia. Competition in attracting foreign investors, energy supply, market access and relative poverty in India comparing with China are important factors too. However, confident building measures and people-to-people contact are the attempts to ease skepticism in India - China relations as well as US-India relations. For India, the US became a strategic partner in balancing China in Asia and South Asia. For the US, India as the largest democracy became strategic partner in containing China in Indian Ocean access.

Foreign policy choices of India and the US

In shaping the national interest, foreign policy pursuance and choice are essentially in carrying out the targets of each country's national interests. For India and the US, historically and politically differed in background, but formulated effective foreign policy pursuance through rational means especially after the Cold War.

In fact, India during the Cold War had strong link with the Soviet Union in the context of ideological impact and technical cooperation especially in nuclear and long range missiles as Pakistan has been the close partner of China. However, India has been recognized as the biggest democracy in Asia since 1990s. This fact drew the attention of the US in its close partner in Asia especially the core value of democracy is same in pursuing political development in India. Exception was that India's role in the stability and economic development of South Asia was still limited and its relations with China, Pakistan and Sri Lanka was poorly deteriorated in Asia.

Remarkably, the global power shift had impact on states in Asia after the Cold War, especially, there were many states competing in regional power in Asia. Some scholars said post cold war as China century while others pointed out India as emerging geopolitical and geo-economic continental power with the changing global power in international setting. Moreover, Asia was emerging as dynamic economic power with strong military buildups and importance of two ocean theory on Indo-Pacific was a new security thinking for India and China. While China was articulating "China is rising peacefully", India, the competing power for China and the important partner for the US after the Cold War, launched "Look East" policy to engage and explore more comprehensive and proactive Asia policy. In responding the China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), India together with Japan attempted to highlight the importance of three peninsulas, that is, Indo-Pacific peninsula, the West Pacific peninsula and the South Asian peninsula upon which India is an important strategic partner for both the US and Japan.¹¹

After the demise of the Cold War, India's geopolitical position in the Indian Ocean and rapid economic development, typically in information technology development brought India to increasingly important player on the global stage¹² which has been strongly backed up by the world's largest democracy and rising economic development. Moreover, India

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 22

¹¹ Uttam Kumar Sinha (Ed.): *Emerging Strategic Trends in Asia, India, Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, 2015, pp. 34-35 (Hereafter this work will be referred to as Sinha: *Emerging Strategic Trends*)

¹² Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations*, p.1

domestic development such as representative government, rule of law and domestic tranquility were the supportive factors in formulating India foreign policy though the then government of India was coalition government under the leadership of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh who led the India Congress Party.¹³ India Congress has powerful leverage on foreign policy options considering on national vital interests. The first foreign policy shift of India after the Cold War has been the “Look East Policy” with the aim of extending regional economic cooperation and engaging with geopolitically important partners not only to Asia but also to the western countries. It was true that although India economy was rapidly rising, its infrastructure, market access and foreign investment potentials were in restricted position.

As trade and economic development became crucial for many countries after the Cold War, For India, its traditional concept on Indian influence over Indian Ocean reinforced with new geopolitical thinking on three bays concepts, that is, South China Sea dominated by China, Indian Ocean dominated by India and Arabia Sea by Arabs.¹⁴ Strategically, India and China are competing in wooing the support of Asian countries whereas both India and China have strategic economic interdependence in economic and business development. Clashes in South China Sea and East China Sea linking to the US military presence in the Pacific Ocean and Taiwan Strait extended the opportunity for the strong US involvement in Asian continent.

In this context, the US as a the strategic partner of Asia Pacific countries, established its maritime power with India in Indian Ocean and Arabia Sea both of which are primarily important for the US military and economic interests. President Obama clearly articulated that the US is the Pacific nation and this twenty-first century is the Pacific century when he gave state visit to Japan in 2009 for his first time visit to Asia. It can be seen that rising Asian powers attempted to place foothold as regional power and at the same time, the US prioritized its foreign policy attention on Asia too.

India’s global diplomacy became more pronounced due to end of the Cold War politics and India’s rapid economic growth amid domestic factor was one of the prominent forces in India foreign policy. International attention has been given to India as India is a huge potential market in international trade. Retail sector alone is worth an estimate of US \$ 450 billion in 2000.¹⁵ In fact, India in the early 2000s did not expect to be a major global player and was reluctant and delayed in responding to some major issues such as India’s response to uprising in Middle East, the US-led isolation against Iran and Myanmar, and NATO military action in Libya. India opposed NATO military action against Libya together with Brazil, China, Russia and Germany in voting at the UNSC Resolution 1973.¹⁶ India government was aware of the pressure from human rights activist groups in India which challenged New Delhi government to stand with people or with dictators in Myanmar and Sri Lanka.

For US, its foreign policy continuously strived to dominate the world by using many means since the end of WW II. One of the means was the democratic elections¹⁷ for popular governments in many countries before 9/11 attack. US military operation against Iraq in 2002

¹³ Ibid., p. Summary

¹⁴ Sinha: *Emerging Strategic Trends*, p. 33

¹⁵ Kronstadt & Others: *India: the US Relations* p. 11

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 11

¹⁷ William Blum: *America’s Deadliest Export; Democracy, The Truth about US Foreign Policy and Everything Else*, London, Zed Book, 2014, p. 1 (Hereafter this work will be referred to as Blum: *America’s Deadliest Export*)

