

# **US-India Strategic Bargaining and Power Balancing in South Asia**

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## **Abstract**

The relationship between United States and India has transformed from estrangement to wider engagement since 2004. With the convergence of interests and shared values both the US and India came close towards each other and evolved strategic partnership through civil nuclear cooperation. This paper analyzes the cost and benefit of strategic partnership with India for US, the impact of India's emergence as regional power on South Asian balance of power and its impact on Pak-US relationship. It also focuses on security structure of the region and challenges for the US to maintain strategic partnership with two rival states (India and Pakistan). The paper also gives some recommendations for balancing power in the region in order to ensure durable peace not only between India and Pakistan but also in south Asia.

## **Introduction**

US-India remained estranged from each other till 1990 because of divergent goals and interests. From the very beginning, India is pursuing a policy of strategic autonomy and neutrality in world politics while the US policies revolve around containment of communism during Cold War and in post-Cold War era, the US is struggling for maintaining her uni-polar status and now fighting against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. Relations between the two countries have seen many ups and down; both countries remain estranged from each other because of their conflicting policies and interests. India remained strategically irrelevant for the US because of its inclination towards non-alignment and its views remained similar to the Soviet's policies in the world politics. Relationship between the two countries remained a victim of

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incompatible obsessions, as they were close to each other's principal enemies- US to Pakistan and India to Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> United States was working for nuclear non-proliferation and wanted India and Pakistan to sign Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty but India considered NPT as the three Ds of the US nuclear policies that is Dominance, Discrimination, and Double standard.<sup>2</sup> However, with the end of Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US priorities in the region changed. US-India relationship is transforming from estrangement to wider engagement, which is an important geopolitical development of the post-Cold War era.<sup>3</sup> The openness of Indian economy, democracy and relations with other powers of Asia bring the US closer to India. With convergence of interests, both countries have evolved strong bilateral relationship and since 2004, they have established strategic partnership. US has declared India as an indispensable and natural partner and concluded with India a ten years defense agreements for civil nuclear cooperation. United States is also looking for greater strategic space of India in Afghanistan. This paper aims to analyze the US-India strategic partnership and Pakistan's possible counter-measures for balancing. It will help in recognizing Pakistan's importance for the US objectives in the region more than India by addressing the following questions regarding the US-India strategic partnership, its implication for Pakistan and South Asia balance of power and its impacts on Pakistan US relationship. (1) Will strategic partnership with India further the US core interests in the region better than Pakistan? (2) What will be the impacts of Indian emergence as a regional power on South Asia balance of

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<sup>1</sup> Strobe T. (2004). *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb*. New Delhi, NY: Viking.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.p.7

<sup>3</sup> Marshall M. B. (2010). U.S.-India Initiative Series: America's Interests in India. (Working Paper). *Center of a New American Security*, p.5

power? (3) Can the US afford to ignore Pakistan's legitimate interests in Afghanistan? (4) What challenges would the US face while maintaining strategic partnership with both India and Pakistan?

### **US Strategic Interests in the Region and India**

The end of cold war and collapse of Soviet Union has brought significant changes in the world political and strategic scene. Changing from bipolar to a unipolar world, United States emerged the sole hegemon of the world. United States introduced a new World Order in order to maintain her global superiority and dictate the world on its own terms. The purpose behind new World Order was to establish new regional alliances in different parts of the globe and these regional alliances or regional powers would play important role in supporting, safeguarding and advancing the US core interests in the world.<sup>4</sup> The US-India strategic partnership and civil nuclear deal indicate that the US considers India much important to serve this role, better than other states in South Asian region. India is also important for United States because of its burgeoning economy, trade- driven foreign policy, expanding footprint in the region and the world and strong bilateral relations with great powers.<sup>5</sup>

### **Containment of China**

The growing advancement of China in economic and military fields has the potential to pose threats to the US supremacy in world politics, may lead to multipolar world, and is one of the most important factors in US-India strategic

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<sup>4</sup> Ejaz, A. United States India Relations: An Expanding Strategic Partnership. *Pakistan Vision*. 13(1),p.118

<sup>5</sup> Teresita C. S. (ED). (2008). Partnership with India: Regional Power, Global Hopes in Ashley J. Tellis Kuo, Mercy and Marble, Andrew (Ed). *Challenges and Choices*. USA: The National Bureau of Asian Research. p.199

partnership. However, the US interests face serious challenges in south Asian region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) may endanger the US interests in economic and strategic fields.<sup>6</sup> The emergence of India as a regional and global power will serve the US national interests in the region, as India will balance power and influence in the region against China. One of the motives behind the civil nuclear deal is to help India to become strong enough to contain China.<sup>7</sup> China's interests in the region include gaining access to markets and raw materials, preventing instabilities as well as preventing anti-China activities in the region. The presence of the US in the Asian region, its power, influence, and the level of cooperation with India in civil nuclear field is a sign of the US' designs to put China in a secondary position in the region and to limit its potential strategic choices and its regional and international ambitions. The US India strategic partnership has the potential to influence the course of events in Asia.<sup>8</sup> This deal will enable India to get hold of the most modern military equipment in conventional and nuclear fields and space technology, resulting in major setback for China.

### **The Transition towards Multipolar World**

The greatest threat to the US' super power status is the transition to a more multipolar global order. The global power shift to Asia will affect the US unipolar status and its global domination, a multipolar world will replace the existing unipolar international strategic structure, and the Asian powers will

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<sup>6</sup> Ejaz A. *Op Cit.* p.120

<sup>7</sup> Sadia T. (2008). *Indo-US Nuclear Cooperation: Altering Strategic Positioning and Shifting Balance of Power in South Asia*. Colombo, CL: Regional Centre for Strategic Studies p. 84

<sup>8</sup> Venu R. (2002). *India-China-US Triangle: A 'Soft' Balancing of Power System in the Making*. Washington D.C, US: Centre for Strategic and International Studies. p .40.

contest the predominance of US.<sup>9</sup> The growing influence of new powers (China, Turkey, Brazil, India, and Iran) contributes to lessening of the US ability to achieve its goals in the world unilaterally. According to Henry Kissinger, the US will continuously assist India to develop conventional and nuclear weapons and that capability could be used to prevent the emergence of another powerful state between Aden and Singapore.<sup>10</sup> The US needs close cooperation with the regional powers in order to achieve her interests and maintain her unipolar status. Strategic partnership and civilian nuclear deal with India will help the US in maintaining her unipolar status and the existing international order.

### **Economic Gravity of Asia**

The rising economic and financial strength of Asia has largely contributed to the shift of power to Asia. The power challenges and power shifts in the global power structure are because of Asia's economic strength, which contributed to Asian political influence over the existing international order.<sup>11</sup> The long-term challenge to the US global supremacy centered on Asia because of the economic gravity and geostrategic influence of the Asian region spurred by China's rise will completely change the global balance of power and will affect the US interests.<sup>12</sup> The core US goal in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century is to establish and consolidate its status in order to maintain its hegemony in the world. The growing economic development gives India confidence to increase its hard power naval ships, aircraft and weapon

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<sup>9</sup> Subash K. (17 April, 2012). The Global Power Shift to Asia: Geostrategic and Geopolitical Implications. *Al Jazeera Center for Studies*. p.3

<sup>10</sup> *The Indian Express*, (16 November 2004).

<sup>11</sup> Subash K. *Op Cit*. p.2

<sup>12</sup> Marshall M. B. *Op Cit*. p.6

systems, which will in turn place it in better position to safeguard the US economic interests in the region.<sup>13</sup>

### **Stability of South Asia**

India's role is critical in strengthening and stabilizing the South Asia, preserving the US interests and addressing challenges to the US interests in the region. India might prove a more potent security provider in the Indian Ocean region for the US. South and East Asia depend on the Indian Ocean sea lines of communication for energy and trade and their dominance by one state will lead to confrontation among great powers and will have disastrous consequences for the world economy. United States needs partnership with India in order to share security burden in the Indian Ocean.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, US-India strategic partnership is based on securing the US interests and ensuring Indian Ocean's stability. Strategic partnership with India would allow the US to enforce a broader framework of maritime security in the Indian Ocean. For this purpose, Indian Navy could play an important role in furthering and safeguarding the US security interests in the Indian Ocean and might prove a strategic asset in this regard.

### **Shared Goals and Interests**

Since the end of Cold war, the US and Indian economic, political and security interests have been converging. Peace and stability in South Asia, elimination of terrorism, economic growth and normalization of relations in the whole region are the shared values and interests of both the US and India.<sup>15</sup> Both the US and India want to prevent dominance of any single power in Asia,

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<sup>13</sup> Donald L. B (Spring 2006). India in the Indian Ocean. *Naval War College Review*, 59(2), pp. 58-89.

<sup>14</sup> Marshall M. B. op cit. p.8

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p.6

supporting democracy, dependence on smooth and stable functioning of energy markets and maritime security of the Indian Ocean.<sup>16</sup> The shared values of pluralism, democracy, and India's emergence as a regional and global power will weigh heavily in forming and safeguarding the US' interests in the emerging multipolar world order.

### **India's Role in Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement Operations**

US has the power to intervene in any part of the globe but it cannot stay for long to rebuild the nation and restore civil society. The US faces serious challenges in restoring civil order and reshaping democratic institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Therefore, it is necessary for the US to have forces that will willingly stay for an extended period to restore law and order in the war-torn countries and reshape their civil society. Moreover, the traditional partners of the US may not prove effective for carrying out peace enforcement and peacekeeping missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. The US needs a non-western partner to cooperate with the US in its military efforts in order to avoid the blame of being an imperial power. India remained active in peacekeeping missions and it could play a significant role in the US nation-building efforts in future.

India wants to participate in maintaining international status quo but to shape the international system in such a way that could provide a greater role to India in global affairs. Therefore, India supports the US and is continuously participating in peacekeeping missions. India's capacity for providing sufficient troops for carrying out peace and nation building efforts is perhaps one of the most important factors that drive the US towards India.

### **US India Strategic Partnership**

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<sup>16</sup>Teresita C. S. op cit.p.200

US-India strategic partnership has adversely affected Pak-US partnership and disturbed balance of power in South Asia. India and the US have established strategic partnership through their civilian nuclear deal. United States in a US-India joint statement in July 2005, declared India a responsible nuclear weapon state with advanced nuclear technology and agreed on full civilian nuclear energy cooperation with India.<sup>17</sup> The civil nuclear deal will improve the existing defense equipment of India that will ultimately lead to its superiority in conventional and nuclear weapons. A strong bilateral partnership with India is in the US interests as India is an emerging regional and global power increasingly assumes roles in the world commensurate with its position as a stakeholder in the international system. Both are natural partners and share common values and interests for a stable and secure world.

India's motives behind civil nuclear deal with the US includes meeting the growing energy and fuel requirement, acquisition and advancement of civil nuclear technology, to become a dominant player in the region and across the globe and establish close relations with the world super power to get her support in acquiring permanent seat in UNSC.<sup>18</sup> According to Indian officials, the civil nuclear technology would advance its trade across the globe. Indian and the US officials believe that strategic partnership would advance security and stability in Asia through an open, balanced, and effective cooperation in the region.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>17</sup> K. Alan. (27 October, 2010) Kronstadt. India-U.S. Relations. *CRS Report for Congress*. Washington DC: Library of Congress..p.50

<sup>18</sup> Sadia T.Op Cit. p.42

<sup>19</sup> Ejaz A. Op Cit.p.151

India's strategic objectives in the region and the world include a strong commitment to strategic autonomy (a policy not to align its foreign policy with any other state), emergence as a regional and global player and recovering a major place in world politics.<sup>20</sup> US objectives behind the deal are to help India to fulfill her energy needs, to strengthen non-proliferation regimes and to support India to become a major world power. South Asian region involves full spectrum of US interests. Particularly Pakistan and India involve many US interests including security, economy, and humanity. However, there are several threats to US interest in the region. With the burgeoning economy, India will emerge as a regional economic power in the near future and this profound economic growth will provide substantial investment opportunities to the US.<sup>21</sup>

According to Pakistani officials, US-India Strategic partnership would destabilize the strategic balance in South Asia and will enable India to project power in Asia. However, there are certain challenges to US-India strategic partnership as the notion of strategic autonomy and US-India differences over Iran. India wants independence of action or in other words strategic autonomy while United States wants to align foreign policies of other states with its own interests. However, there are signs that India has shifted its foreign policy to some extent from strategic autonomy to aligning itself with the US as it has supported the US policies in the region especially the US military action against Afghanistan and the US sanction against Iran. The strategic partnership and civil nuclear agreement with the US has compelled India to subordinate its foreign policy to

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<sup>20</sup> Teresita C. S. Op Cit.p.201

<sup>21</sup>Thomas L G. (1 April, 2005) Balancing Interests Amidst the India and Pakistan Conflict. USAWC Strategic Research Project. p.10

the US global interests and turned it into a satellite and junior partner of the United States.<sup>22</sup>

### **US Assistance to India**

In contemporary international relations, the US has successfully maintained its unique position as a super power. Due to its technological and military superiority in the world, it possesses the power to dictate diplomatic and political outcomes around the globe. Many scholars of international relations view India's strategic partnership with the US as a product of both countries' complementary interests in the contemporary world. India is struggling to attain significant position in the world power structure and the US is assisting India in gaining its rightful position in the world because India's rise as a regional and global power will serve as a watchdog for the US interests in South Asia as well as in the world.

### **Permanent Indian Seat in UNSC**

The U.N. Security Council remains a significant source of legitimacy for a worldwide action and is indispensable for securing the US national interests and maintaining the international order. Advancing and safeguarding the US interests in present global threats requires successful multilateral actions. The old institutions of the world are struggling to adapt to the changing circumstances around the globe. The US president Barack Obama is committed to renovating the old institutions and supports the integration of rising powers as mainstay of rule-based global order. President Obama's endorsement to India in November 2010,

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<sup>22</sup> Lilat M. (October 2006). *Indo-US Strategic Partnership: Are We There Yet?* (No. 39) New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. p.4

for a permanent UNSC seat is the first significant step in this direction.<sup>23</sup> The US President as well as the congress support India's permanent role in the SC because the US is committed to elevating India to its rightful position in the globe.<sup>24</sup> The U.N. Security Council possesses significant power to decide upon the question of war or peace, India's permanent role in the council would increase political and legal authority of the US for initiating multilateral action in the world that would advance US objectives.<sup>25</sup> Permanent seat in the UNSC will provide India with formal acceptance of its status as responsible nuclear power state and greater legitimacy of initiatives. Having a permanent seat in UNSC India will emerge as a major player in the international system and will act proactively in maintaining global peace and security. However, India's permanent position in the UNSC will fuel regional confrontations, conflicts and will have disastrous effects for Pakistan. Being the traditional rival India will endanger the very existence of Pakistan. Moreover, this will have serious consequences for Pak-US relations as Pakistan will also see for same status in the UNSC for which the US might not agree.

### **US Assistance to Various Sectors of Development in India**

United States assists India in the development of efficient energy markets. Both the countries are working on projects like carbon reduction and energy efficiency and have agreed to work jointly for the development of smart grids and clean coal technologies. As a part of their strategic partnership, President Obama and Indian Prime Minister have launched an initiative of Clean Energy, energy

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<sup>23</sup>Kara C. M, and Stewart M. P. (December 2010). UN Security Council Enlargement and U.S. Interests Council (No. 59). New York: *Council on Foreign Relations*. p.3

<sup>24</sup>K. Alan Kronstadt. (1 September 2011). India: Domestic Issues, Strategic Dynamics, and U.S. Relations. Washington DC: Library of Congress, p.8

<sup>25</sup>Kara C. M, and Stewart M. P, Op Cit.p.16

security and Climate Change.<sup>26</sup> The US government strongly supports India's economic reform policies and encourages expanded bilateral engagement in trade and economics. US also provides market access to Indian goods and services.

### **US to India Space Cooperation**

India sought to get a range of space, dual use and nuclear technologies from the US, as these are important for the future technological and economic growth of the country. However, the US remained reluctant to deliver such technologies to India, as the US officials are greatly concerned about the possible transfer of these sensitive technologies to other parties.<sup>27</sup> In recent years, commerce department of the US has removed hurdles to trade with the civil space agencies of India. United States encourage India's active participation in different fora such as committee on Group on Earth Observation and Earth Observation Satellites and are willing to take initiative for cooperation in the field of human space flight. Bilateral space cooperation will help India in predicting accurate climate and weather.<sup>28</sup>

### **Indian Commitment to US**

India is fully committed to the US goals in the region. In return, India wants to achieve three objectives from its relations with the US; permanent seat in the UNSC, legalization of nuclear status, recognition of Line of control as an international border between Pakistan and India

### **India's Role in Afghanistan's Reconstruction and Rehabilitation**

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<sup>26</sup>Joint Statement between President Obama and Prime Minister Singh, 2009

<sup>27</sup>Sridhar K. (20 September, 2004). US to Ease Curbs on Space, N-Facilities. *The Hindu*.

<sup>28</sup>Rajeswari P. R. (2011). US-India Strategic Dialogue: Sky's No Limit for Space. New Delhi: *Observer Research Foundation*

India envisages a peaceful and stable Afghanistan that can serve as a transportation energy and trade hub in the region. India is actively assisting the Afghan rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. India attaches great values to its relations with Afghanistan and is a key regional contributor to the Afghan humanitarian and reconstruction assistance. It supports all major sectors of development in Afghanistan and extends help and assistance in road projects in order to reduce the country's dependence on Pakistan.<sup>29</sup> The longstanding Indian interests and the underlying purpose behind its huge investment in the country are to bypass Pakistan's influence and to increase its soft power in South Asia.

India is fully committed to the Afghan unity and independence. India supports 'the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned' peace efforts and is against Pakistan's involvement in the process of peace in Afghanistan as it is worried about the US' dependence on Pakistan's military for gaining military victory in the Afghan war. India perceives that Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan endgame would bring catastrophic implications for its security.<sup>30</sup> Pakistan is also worried about India's growing role in Afghanistan. India has established consulates in Afghanistan near the Pakistan border which is used for providing material support to the separatist elements in Baluchistan. India is also involved in energizing the insurgencies in Pakistan's tribal regions.

### **India's Policy over Iran Nuclear Issue**

India-Iran relations remained positive throughout history. Both countries maintained high-level engagement after the 1979 Islamic revolution in Iran. In order to strengthen cooperation in energy, economic, education and

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<sup>29</sup> K. Alan Kronstadt, (2011). *Op Cit.* p.19

<sup>30</sup> Siddharth V. (6 June, 2011) India Finds Its Second Wind in Afghanistan *Japan Times*

science as well as to work together on Afghan counterterrorism and reconstruction both have launched bilateral strategic partnership in 2003.<sup>31</sup> However, India has also strengthened its ties with the US, and slowly shifted its policy over Iran nuclear issue when it voted with the US in 2005-2006 International Atomic Energy sessions. In recent years, tension grew between the two countries as India has fully supported the international sanctions against Iran. In response to India's policy shift Iran has also made changes in its Kashmir policy. Iran's spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei repeatedly mentioned the Kashmir problem in late 2010 that many see as an "Anti-Indian tilt".<sup>32</sup> United States is against the Iran-Pakistan-India gas Pipeline project because the project will benefit Iran economically and will promote cooperation among the neighboring countries. Therefore, the US wants to hamper progress on the project in order to weaken Iran's economy and isolate it in the region. Despite Iran's continuous efforts for the completion of the project, India has abandoned its participation due to the US' concerns over IPI project.<sup>33</sup>

### **Power Balancing In South Asia**

A nation state needs power and strength in order to survive in the anarchic international order. If a state is incapable or fails to acquire power, it can become subservient to other powerful states and will ultimately lose its autonomy, security, and prosperity. The anarchic structure of the world compels nation states to maximize their power and as a result of power maximization a competition for

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<sup>31</sup>Delhi Declaration. (January 2003). Retrieved from

<http://meaindia.nic.in/mystart.php?id=53055202>. Retrieved on February 2014

<sup>32</sup>Pranay S. (6 December, 2010). A Persian Gulf, *Outlook*. Retrieved from <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/a-persian-gulf/268210> Retrieved on February 2014

<sup>33</sup>Sandeep D. (3 August, 2011). Iran Hopes India Will Revive IPI Project *The Hindu*, Iran Envoy Says 90 Per Cent Work on Tri-nation Gas Pipeline Complete (17 June 2011). *The Hindus*.

power among states becomes a natural state of affair in the world politics.<sup>34</sup> Power balancing is the main goal of all nation states as any strategic gain by one state directly affects another state. US- India strategic partnership and civilian nuclear cooperation will disturb the strategic balance of power in South Asia. The agreement will help India to become a major power and to advance US strategic interests in the region. Strategic partnership with the US will facilitate joint weapons production, missile defense cooperation and transfer of civil and military technology to India. The US-India civilian nuclear deal indicates that US has recognized India as a leading power and will no longer treat both India and Pakistan as equal competitors in the region and has overlooked Pakistani apprehensions that the deal will upset strategic power balancing in South Asia.<sup>35</sup> However, US India strategic partnership and cooperation in civilian nuclear technology have greatly disturbed balance of power in South Asia. The rising of India as a regional power and its increasing influence in Afghanistan will decrease the role and influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan and pose threats to Pakistan's security, left Pakistan in strategic imbalance and will affect relations between the US and Pakistan. In response to the defense and civil nuclear cooperation between US and India, Pakistan would definitely struggle for balancing and might take counter measures by strengthening its defense relations and initiate close cooperation with China and even with Russia in nuclear technology.

India and Pakistan are two rival countries and south Asia security context is determined by the nature of their relationship. US policies towards India

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<sup>34</sup> T.V. Paul, James J.W. & Michel F. (Ed). (2004). *Balance of Power; Theory and Practice in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. California: Stanford University Press .p.4

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad I. F. (December, 2009). The India-US Strategic Partnership in Post 9/11: Implications for Pakistan, *Pakistan Vision* 10(2) p.150

directly affect its relations with Pakistan, its goals in Afghanistan and in the whole South Asian region. The strategic partnership with the US has increased India's prestige unprecedentedly while Pakistan's prestige has come at stake as the US desires to make India a major power in the world while Pakistan is treated as a supporting channel. US-India strategic partnership could enhance irregularity in the balance of power between the two rival and confrontational neighbors of South Asia and would lead to arm race in the region. The US-India nuclear deal may severely affect the regional and global security, nuclear non-proliferation, environment, and economic system. It will negatively affect Pak-India peace process, create difficulties for the US to win war in Afghanistan, disturb the security balance of the region, and will drag China and Pakistan into a new arm race with India.<sup>36</sup> India's civil nuclear deal with the US would give India upper hand in its dealing with Pakistan and its superior nuclear technology would pose threats to Pakistan's security, as the growing potentials would encourage its aggressive policy of Cold Start.<sup>37</sup> The deal would change Pakistan's policy of minimum credible deterrence and drag it into an arm race. The civil nuclear deal would create threats to the peace and stability of South Asia.

**US-India Strategic Partnership: Impact on Pak-US Relationship/ Challenges for US to Maintain Partnership with two Rival Countries**

Although a major shift came in the political scenario of South Asia after 9/11 events yet the US India strategic partnership has totally changed the strategic position and shifted the balance of power with a new set of policy arrangements of the region. The US India strategic partnership and civilian nuclear deal has

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<sup>36</sup> Noor U.H., and Asma S. K. (Ed). (4 May, 2006). US-India Nuclear Deal. *IPRI Fact File*. pp.64-65

<sup>37</sup>Shaukat Q. (8 May, 2004).“India's ‘Cold Start’ Strategy”. *Daily Times*

brought a major shift in Pakistan's foreign policy. Pakistan started a policy of diversification as Pakistan has tremendously strengthened its relations with China, pursuing to build close ties with Russia, Iran, Cuba, Uzbekistan and other countries. Pakistan has changed its strategic thinking and has reevaluated its priorities in the region because of growing conventional imbalance between India and Pakistan.<sup>38</sup> In response to US-India civil nuclear deal Pakistan increased cooperation with China in nuclear energy field. This Cooperation in nuclear field will fulfill Pakistan's energy needs and will strengthen its bilateral relations with China. Close cooperation between Pakistan and China will also benefit China, as it will restore balance of power in South Asia. US cannot afford to ignore Pakistan concerns while evolving strategic partnership with India because Pakistan is a significant non-NATO ally of the US in the war against terrorism. It will be difficult for the US to counter the threats of terrorism, extremism and other forms of violence; nuclear proliferation, instability, and conflict in the region with Indian help alone not Pakistan. In this regard, Pakistan's support will be more critical for the US than India. US-India strategic partnership is a product of ideological affinity while Pak-US partnership is the product of strategic necessity.<sup>39</sup> United States needs Pakistan's support and cooperation for the peaceful solution of Afghanistan imbroglio, elimination of terrorism and Islamic militancy, monitoring China and Iran's economic and military development and for maintaining its presence in the region. Pakistan also remained important for the US because of its geostrategic location, strong relations with China, Islamic

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<sup>38</sup>Adil S. M. Indo-US Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement: Implications on South Asian Security Environment. *The Henry L. Stimson Center*. July, 2006. p.19

<sup>39</sup>Mehran G. (Winter 2009). U.S. National Security Strategy: Managing Strategic Partnership in South Asia. *Journal of International Affairs*. pp 72-85

and cultural bonds with Iran, cordial relations with the Islamic world and influence in Afghanistan. Pakistan's nuclear capabilities, professional militaries, seaports (Karachi and Gwader) and rich natural resources further enhance its prestige and significance.

### **Pakistan's Geostrategic Location**

Pakistan's geopolitical and geostrategic significance propels it towards the new great game in Middle East. Pakistan's geographic location places it at the confluence of three regional powers-Russia, China and India, its coastline links Central Asia to Indian Ocean and its nearness to the oil resources of Persian Gulf make it a centre as an energy corridor to Asia and the whole world. Pakistan's geopolitical and geostrategic position plays important role in determining the strategic dynamics, affecting power balancing and strategic alliance in the region.<sup>40</sup> Pakistan's geographic location will make it a key hub of communication and energy corridor as Pakistani ports on its coastline will create wide economic activity.

### **Pak-China Counter Measures in Response to US-India Civil Nuclear Deal**

China is Pakistan's reliable friend and strategic ally and has always come to help when Pakistan is in trouble. China provides assistance to Pakistan's nuclear and missile efforts, development of military and military-Industrial capabilities. A solid strategic partnership with Pakistan is the key element of China's policy to contain Indian power structure. China has proliferated nuclear and missile technology to Pakistan and continues to advance nuclear and defense

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<sup>40</sup> Feroz H. K, and Masellis, N. M. (January ,2012) US-Pakistan Strategic Partnership: A Track 2 Dialogue. (No 2012.002). U.S. Naval Postgraduate School: *Center On Contemporary Conflict*

capabilities of the country.<sup>41</sup> India is greatly concerned with Chinese policy of setting up military and naval facilities in Pakistan. China has always supported Pakistan's stand on nuclear weapons and defended its desire to advance its nuclear capacity. In response to the US-India strategic partnership, civil nuclear deal, and the US support to India to emerge as regional power, Pakistan and China have strengthened their defense ties. China has agreed to provide F-22 frigates to Pakistan's Navy and sign an agreement with Pakistan for two nuclear reactors and justified its arm sale to Pakistan on the grounds that the US is providing similar weapon systems to India, suggesting that such export is necessary for South Asian stability.<sup>42</sup>

### **Difficulties in Managing Pak-India competing interests in Afghanistan**

Pakistan and India pursue different goals and competing objectives in Afghanistan. India's role in stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan would promote its own interests in Afghanistan and in the whole region. India's strategic interests in Afghanistan include minimizing Pakistan influence, access to Central Asian Trade and energy resources and projecting power in South Asia while Pakistan wants to counter Indian influence, to establish pro-Pakistani government in Afghanistan, to prevent India from projecting power in the region and to impede Indian support to the separatist elements in Baluchistan.<sup>43</sup> India's contribution to the Afghan security and reconstruction is less critical to the US than ensuring Pakistan support for negotiation and peaceful settlement of Afghanistan conflict. In present scenario, the US dependence on Pakistan's

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<sup>41</sup> Lilat M. *Op Cit.*p.4

<sup>42</sup>Harsh V. P.. (Winter 2012). The Pakistan Thorn in China-India-U.S. Relations. *The Washington Quarterly*.35(1), pp.91-92

<sup>43</sup>Larry H. and Peter C. (2012). India's and Pakistan's Strategies in Afghanistan: Implications for United States and the Region. RAND Corporation.

cooperation to combat the threats of Islamic extremism and terrorism, especially Pakistan's assistance is critical for the US in winning the war in Afghanistan. In this situation, the US has no choice but to accommodate Pakistani sensitivities regarding Indian increasing space in Afghanistan. At Present the situation is worsening in Afghanistan as the Taliban control over the Afghan territory is increasing day by day and there remains little hope for the US' complete victory in Afghanistan. Afghan government and the US have realized that Pakistan's support is crucial for the peace and reconciliation process, facilitating the US safe exit from Afghanistan and saving Afghanistan from collapsing.<sup>44</sup> If Pakistan's interests are not secured in Afghanistan, it has the potential to undermine the US efforts to negotiate peaceful settlement with Taliban, which is critical for the US and NATO's safe exit from Afghanistan. With this fact the US has to reconsider the value of its security partnership with Pakistan and to minimize Indian role in Afghanistan as Pakistan's response to the growing Indian Strategic space would be detrimental to both the US and Indian interests.<sup>45</sup> Afghanistan is a landlocked country and is dependent on Pakistan for its economic development and transit trade to access international markets. Efforts for elimination of Al-Qaeda and Taliban and rebuilding of Afghanistan cannot be carried out in a vacuum but rather in close cooperation with Pakistan. There is a great domestic pressure on the US because of huge economic burden and increasing casualties in the Afghan war. The failing of US war strategy and the uncooperative and reliable partnership with Karzai government has increased Pakistan's importance for the US's safe

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<sup>44</sup>Humera I. (Winter 2010-11)Pak-Afghan Ties in the Light of Pak-US Strategic Dialogue *Regional Studies*. pp.14-15; Khalid I. (8 October, 2012). Russia-Pakistan-America. *The Nation*

<sup>45</sup>Larry H. and Peter C. Op. Cit.

exit from Afghanistan and ensuring peace and stability in Afghanistan and the whole region.

### **Re-Orientation in Relations with Russia**

Previously Pak-Russia relations remained estranged due to Pakistan's alignment with the West and Russian close ties with India. In response to the US-Indian civilian nuclear agreement, Pakistan started a policy of diversifying its relation across the globe. With the changed priorities of US in the region, Pakistan also changed its priorities and reoriented its relations with Russia. Recently there is warm relationship between the two countries as the changing scenario in Afghanistan have converged their interests. In 2011, Russia endorsed Pakistan to join Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and offered assistance for the expansion of Steel Mill, technical support for Guddu and Muzaffargarh power Plants and Thar Coal Project.<sup>46</sup> The SCO is an important regional initiative design for bringing peace and stability in the region. Its membership would enhance Pakistan's status in the region and would help in removing the apprehension of Russia, China, and Iran that Pakistan is a part of the western security alliance. Pakistan has realized that its alliance with the US has severed its relations with nearer countries, and cost it strategically, economically and socially. The US-India civil nuclear deal has promoted Pakistan relations with these countries to the advanced strategic level. The changing geo-strategic landscape of the region has improved Pakistan's relations with Russia. Strong bilateral relations with Russia will be helpful in improving Pakistan's security needs, technology transfer in scientific and research fields and access to Russian markets. The growing Pak-

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<sup>46</sup>Nazir H. (2012). Pak-Russia Relations: Lost Opportunities and Future Options. *Journal of Political Studies*. 19(1). pp 79-89.

Russia relations are a cause of tension for the US and India and they are striving to impede the pace. US is greatly concerned with growing Pak-Russian relations as it would endanger the US interests in Afghanistan.

### **Reinforcing Bilateral Relations with Iran**

Common border, cultural bonds, and religious affinity are the factors that facilitate Pak-Iran relations. But Pakistan's alignment with the west and Iran's closeness to India kept them estranged from each other. However, the changing security situation of South Asia brought them closer towards each other. In response to such development as the presence of NATO and the US forces in Afghanistan, war against terrorism, the US-India strategic partnership and arm-race in the region both Pakistan and Iran have redefined their national challenges and threat perception which constitute solid foundation for constructing and reinforcing their mutual relationship. The US-India strategic partnership and civil nuclear deal has brought Pakistan and Iran closer towards each other. US wants to secure full support of India to isolate Iran and contain Iranian efforts to acquire nuclear technology. Pakistan is interested in Iran's energy resources and wants to complete the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Gas pipeline project for which the US is striving to impede.

### **Traditional Rivalry between Pakistan and India**

The South Asian region involves important US strategic goals and interests and achieving these interests require partnership with regional partners. The challenge US faces in this regard is the rivalry between Pakistan and India. During cold war era, the US remained estranged from India and attained its objectives in the region with the help and support of Pakistan but this outdated policy will no longer serve the US interests in South Asia. The US requires strong relations with both India and Pakistan for achieving different goals. However, United States face

challenges while maintaining strategic partnership with both India and Pakistan at the same time as cooperation with one will endanger relations with the other. The US-India civil nuclear deal in the security context of South Asia will create hurdles instead of promoting the US objectives in the region. The deal has greatly disturbed balance of power between the two rival countries. Pakistan wants the US assistance in economic and military fields especially it is interested in civil nuclear deal like that concluded with India in order to restore balance of power in the region for which the US is not willing.<sup>47</sup>

### **Recommendations**

The US strategic partnership with India has adversely affected Pakistan's security, negatively influenced its relations with the US, and disturbed the balance of power in the region. Following are some recommendations that will help in restoring balance of power in the region, reducing negative effects of the US-India strategic partnership and civil nuclear cooperation on Pak-US relationship.

1. Although the US will gain benefits from Strategic partnership with India in terms of economy, yet partnership with Pakistan is more critical for the US because of its geostrategic significance and its relations with region's key countries.
2. US-India strategic partnership has disturbed balance of power in the region but Pakistan and China could restore the balance in the region by strengthening their defense ties. China being a close strategic partner of Pakistan has initiated progress in this connection by signing an agreement for providing two nuclear reactors to Pakistan.

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<sup>47</sup>Humera I. Op Cit. pp.10-12

3. Pakistan would serve the US interests in the region better than India because the US needs Pakistan's support and cooperation in winning the Afghan war, and restoring regional peace and stability. India is less important for the US in the context of Afghanistan.
4. Pakistan should keep focus on the ongoing policy of diversifying its relations with all countries based on equality and mutual respect and cooperation that help Pakistan in solving its energy crisis, overcoming economic instability, and advancing its military and nuclear capabilities.
5. The US strategic objectives in the region require support and cooperation of both Pakistan and India and it is only possible when all outstanding disputes between the two rival countries are peacefully resolved. The US can play important role in this regard. US should treat both India and Pakistan equally in terms of nuclear technology and weapons.
6. Pakistan needs close cooperation with Iran in order to meet the energy needs of the country. The completion of Iran Pakistan Indian Gas pipeline project will fulfill Pakistan's energy needs. Cooperation is vital in other areas as well such as scientific research, defense, technical and trade between the two countries.
7. Pakistan needs to expand its trade across the globe as a stable economic system will attract investors, enhance its confidence, and enable it to make dealing with the US on equal basis.
8. Pakistan needs to regulate its relations with all countries of the world based on equality, mutual respect, and cooperation irrespective of the super or lesser power in order to increase its soft image in the world.

**Conclusion**

The economic constraints, the rise of new power centers and transition towards multipolar world have compelled the US to involve regional powers in order to meet the challenges to its global superiority and its influence in the world. Strategic partnership with both India and Pakistan is essential for the US in order to meet these challenges. Achieving US interests and objectives, maintaining her super power status and keeping the existing international system according to values and wishes of super power, the US requires balance, peace, and stabilization of the whole region. US-India strategic partnership will be beneficial for the US, as partnership with stronger India will help the US in shaping regional order according to its own interests and values. The US wants to remain in near future the only powerful actor in the region; partnership with India will secure this interest of the US as India's emergence as a dominant regional power will stabilize Asian regional order. However, Pak-India traditional rivalry remained a dominant factor of South Asian security complex. The US civil nuclear deal with India would adversely affect Pakistan's security and disturb the balance of power between the two countries. In response to the US-India nuclear deal Pakistan has strengthened its defense ties with China, reestablished its relations with Russia and Iran and other countries, which Pakistan previously ignored due its alliance with US. Pakistan has strengthened its relations with China, Russia, Iran, and other countries that remained hostile to US. Close partnership among these countries would pose serious threats to the US interests in the region and her super power status. Moreover, the challenges of democratization, nation building, China's containment, and securing the US national security interests will require both financial and human resources as well as a new set of alliances in different

parts of the world. The US will need close cooperation with both India and Pakistan on equal basis. It will be in the best interests of the US to ensure relations with the two countries on equal basis. Therefore, the US should play its due role in resolving all outstanding issues between Pakistan and India especially the Kashmir dispute as well as the US should facilitate regional cooperation in trade and development. Strong bilateral relations between Pakistan and India will ensure Asia's stability that will in turn promote US values of democracy and pluralism.

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