

The US Policy Toward South Asia: An Historical Assessment

Dr. Muhammad Nawaz Bhatti

*Associate Professor
Department of Politics & IR
University of Sargodha*

Misbah Shaheen

*Lecturer
Department of Politics & IR
University of Sargodha*

Dr. Asia Saif Alvi

*Assistant Professor
Department of Politics & IR
University of Sargodha*

Abstract

The 21st century witnessed substantial changes in American foreign policy with reference to South Asia; the US considered this region as a "strategic backwater for long time. In the days of Cold War, the US treated it only for detecting the Russian expansion in the region. However, the incident of 9/11 and increasing strategic collaboration between the US and India forced the US not to underestimate this region. Moreover, recent deposition of this region and its shifts in global power affairs has augmented the role of South Asia. The presence of the US Forces in Afghanistan, hostility between two atomic powers, Pakistan and India, the US anxieties about the spread of nuclear weapons, war against terrorism, vastly increasing Chinese influence in the region, and revival of cold war are the subjects that compelled US to entitled South Asia as a key element in its policy.

Keywords: United States, Foreign Policy, South Asia, Terrorism, Nuclear Powers

Introduction

It is noteworthy to describe here that during colonial period, the term "South Asia" was usually renowned as the "Indian Sub-

Continent” as it consisted of series of kingdoms where colonial powers had applied a diverse system of subservience. Presently, South Asia is known for the number of huge countries of the world. The countries belonging to this specific region, for increasing collaboration among them, have set up an association christened as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation). The vitality of the region can be determined through this point that 25 percent of the world's population live in it¹. Besides this, its geo strategic position reflects its significance in the world politics. Strategically, it is located at the cross roads of Asia, and making a defensive perimeter for China. This region is detached from Central Asia by way of a narrow strip of Wakhan (a name of Afghan territory). Moreover, it forms the strategically most important area bordering the Indian Ocean by linking the Middle East with South East Asia. Hence, being the only Super power of the world, the US (United States) has lot of benefits in this vital region; consequently, South Asia has attained a distinctive position in the US foreign policy. In spite the fact that the US neglected the strategic importance of this area for a long time. American foreign policy for South Asia, after WWII, focused only for trade point of view as this region was a key source of export for American Tobacco Company, but thereafter US decided to get rid of the policy of "isolationism" and showed its extreme concentration in global politics for minimizing the Communist influence on the world². Consequently, the American interference in the regional affairs of South Asia rose on account of the various ideological, political and military disputes with Russia. The principal factor which played a pivotal role in developing so much attraction of the US foreign policy toward South Asia was the US view of region's significance for tracking down of its wide-ranging global strategic and geo-political ends in the region. The proximity of major powers like Russia and China with South Asia forced the US policy makers not to neglect this region. This connotation was also based on this point that it is the region that administers the dynamic sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean where it joins Gulf and South East Asia the binary politically unstable and economically precarious regions of Asia. Hence it is very clear that the US interests in this particular region were

not of economic nature but were based on the strategic competition with the Russia which had strong ambitions to maintain supremacy on rest of the powers of South Asia. However, the US regarded this area to control the communist expansion during the Cold War era, but the current changes in the pattern of global power affairs have augmented the strategic status of South Asia. The changing scenario of South Asia, after 9/11 attacks, and increasing strategic cooperation between India and the US have reformed the dimensions of the US foreign policy regarding this area³. The presence of the US Armed Forces in Afghanistan, hostility between two atomic powers of this region, Pakistan and India, the US anxieties about the spread of nuclear weapons, war against terrorism, vastly increasing Chinese influence in the region, growing economic importance of South Asia and revival of cold war between the US and Russia are the subjects which have drastically constrained the US to give central position to this region in its foreign policy. Hence realizing this perspective, at present the US foreign policy depends upon multiple issues instead of single one. The following paragraphs will explain these issues as well as the role of these concerns in constituting and organizing the US foreign policy.

Counter Terrorism

Terrorism and the related ferocious undertakings have remained an undying problem in South Asia for the last several decades. On the one hand, terrorism is being used as a weapon by a number of groups for advancing their particular causes like separatism, religious extremism, national self-determination, so on and so forth. On the other hand, South Asia is badly exaggerated by this global nature of terrorism that is playing a significant role in altering the rhetoric and challenges in South Asia. Currently, not a single state in this region is completely safe from this nightmarish problem. Incidentally, Pakistan, Afghanistan and India are directly facing this issue on their soil in the form of terrorist activities. The states like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal are also passing through this trouble in the shape of ethnic division or political chaos⁴. Essentially, all the states belonging to this region are situated around India such terrestrial closeness among these states have provided a

golden chance for terrorist groups to create cross-border ethnic turmoil as well as operate wide ranging accessible communication system for promoting their activities in the whole world. Moreover, ineligible and corrupt governments along with socio-economic disparities among the people of these states have made this region a bountiful land of terrorism. In addition, the antagonism among the South Asian states weakens political relation; consequently, it can also be considered a principal obstacle in producing collaboration in the region. Even though, a number of efforts have been made from the SAARC platform to minimize these challenges that are commonly faced by all regional states, however the permanent hostility between two major states of South Asia, Pakistan and India, has made all attempts fruitless⁵. In fact, the 'War on Terror' as it was posed by the US in Afghanistan, provided solid foundations to South Asia in becoming hotbed of international terrorism. At that moment, no one can deny this reality that the peace and prosperity of the whole world is at stake due to the menace of terrorism in this region. Therefore, the threats posed by terrorist organizations are a great risk for the US hegemonic design, security and her interests in South Asia. As a result, the US revised its policy management styles as it provides early indication of how important issues may be tackled.

Nuclear Non-Proliferation

The matter of nuclear non-proliferation has remained a keystone in the US foreign policy. Therefore, such issue has become a major ground of shifting the US attention towards South Asia. In this region, Pakistan and India is being provided solid basis of anxiety for the US interests as both countries are atomic power and traditionally hostile in nature.

Both neighboring countries have stronger nuclear arsenal, with new weaponry and more aggressive doctrines, such nuclear arms race between these two is intensifying the risk of confrontation⁶. The US nuclear non-proliferation efforts had to face a severe obstruction in May, 1998, when India showed itself as atomic power by conducting five underground nuclear tests. Similarly on 28th, May 1998, Pakistan repeated the same

practice by conducting six nuclear tests⁷. On 13 May, 1998 the US President Clinton carried out military and economic sanctions on India and Pakistan by applying section 102 of the Arms Export Control Act⁸. These sanctions were however lifted in the following years because both were not ready to step down their nuclear program. In South Asia, the matter of nuclear proliferation cannot be neglected due to a series of contentions. For example, India is endeavoring to achieve supremacy over China while Pakistan is trying to maintain balance of power against its traditionally rival India. The main concern of the US is about the present competition of nuclear weapons between India and Pakistan as this confrontation may transform into atomic war between these two. The US Deputy Secretary, Strobe Talbot, on 12th November, 1998, expressed following three major apprehensions of the US Government about the said issue⁹:

- a. Prevention of nuclear and missile race in South Asia,
- b. Strengthening of global non-proliferation regime
- c. Making efforts for better relations between Pakistan and India and resolving of Kashmir problem

The US reservations are also about nuclear attack by either Pakistan or India, which can cause vast destruction in South Asia. However, the most alarming matter for the US is to monitor and control of nuclear weapons as Dr A.Q. Khan (the founder of Pakistan's atom bomb) and his associates were alleged in December 2003 for sailing nuclear technology to Iran, Libya, and North Korea¹⁰. Soon after, former high ranking US officials Henry Kissinger, William Perry, San Nun and George Shultz in an article published in January 2006 entitled, "A World Free of Nuclear Weapons" expressed their reservations concerning nuclear technology in such a way that "the world is entering into a new nuclear era, with nuclear know-how proliferating and non-state terrorist groups seeking to attain and use weapons of mass destruction"¹¹. Therefore, the most vital interest of the US policy makers is to prevent the two nuclear states in South Asia from nuclear attack so that the peace and prosperity of the whole region could be stabilized at maximum level.

Detailed U.S. Foreign Policy Objectives for Key Actors in South Asia

India:

The perspective of the US foreign policy about India was not in the pink during cold war era due to Indian fragile economy and non-aligned foreign policy. Today by way of strengthening its democratic institutions, solid defense on the bases of atomic power, rapidly developing economy and more than a billion populations, India has received a substantial status in international circles¹². Furthermore, because of above mentioned characteristics it has become a key player for maintaining security and stability of the region. Thus, the US foreign policy makers are focusing on India in lieu of following interests

- i. Deepening strategic ties with India in order to counterbalance China.
- ii. To support India against the emergence of pro-Western South Asian powers.
- iii. Firming up India's influence in East Asia.
- iv. Attainment of Indian support in order to safeguard U.S. interests and presence in the region.
- v. To ensure the US access in Indian markets and other sectors at a greater extent.

Pakistan:

The main objective of the US is to make sure Pakistan's stability and solidarity, so that it could preserve its nuclear abilities, increases its export and averts extremist elements from its country. The US believes that Pakistan can focus the social and economic development of its people, if it would establish good relations with India¹³. The US accepts, to develop a secular and democratic government in Pakistan that can harmonize their policies with U.S. viewpoint. Furthermore, the US foreign policy in Pakistan depends upon following interests.

- i. Overthrow, disassemble, and eradicate al-Qaida network along with other terrorist groups.

- ii. To assist Pakistani Government in meeting with their economic, political as well as social needs so that the masses could not be misled towards violent activities.
- iii. Keeping Pakistan's nuclear arsenal far from the reach of extremists.
- iv. Making joint efforts with Pakistan to maintain lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan:

The first and foremost objective for the US is to defeat Taliban, diminish extremism and strengthen political stability in Afghanistan. In this respect, Washington is making its best effort to advance the capability and legality of Afghan government and institutions at military as well as civilian level¹⁴. Therefore, the US interests in South Asia depend upon two divergent type of strategy. The first target for the US is to fight against terrorism which became a main cause of its intervenes in Afghanistan. The situation after September 11 compelled U.S. to engage in Afghanistan till the complete elimination of international terrorism. Although, the U.S. has been fighting against terrorism in Afghanistan for the last several years, yet there has not been any possibility of solid political or military victory until now. As the U.S. has endeavored a lot to promote capacity of Afghan government. The second challenge before the US is to keep safe Afghanistan's stability from negative impacts of armed violence. However, the US has made substantial efforts in all these fields but strategically cannot be considered satisfactory. Hence, the main concern for the US strategists is to reshape the future of Afghanistan in such a way that the process of nation building could be protected. The US is also struggling to prevent Afghanistan from civil war supported by Afghanistan's neighbors.

The US is also focusing Afghanistan with reference to China in spite of the fact that china is not part of South Asia. The US is judging the worth of China by keeping in view of alliance of China with Pakistan and its contention with India¹⁵. Besides this, out of eight South Asian states five states including Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, India and Pakistan share their

border with China; consequently, China exists as an important stakeholder of this region and intended to perform a decisive role¹⁶. In fact, China observes South Asia as its indispensable part therefore; it has taken vigorous steps to present itself as a dominant actor of this region. Strategically, China's foremost interest in South Asia is to set in motion its access to markets as well as natural resources of the region. Moreover, the sea Lanes in the Indian Ocean is main source of communications for China to pass its oil bulk. Therefore, Chinese main interest is to secure these sea Lanes and create suitable environment in South Asia for carrying out these activities that can be influenced by Indo-US nexus¹⁷. As stated by China White Paper on National Defense 2002, China has taken following steps for countering Indo- US influence in the region.

- i. China has increased the activities of People's Liberation Army (The Name of China' Army) in the Indian Ocean by way of making ports and creating electronic intelligence facilities for safeguarding the Sea Lanes.
- ii. Making efforts to strengthen the nuclear energy and enhance defense capability of Pakistan.
- iii. Supplying arms and other defense equipments to Nepal for augmenting its military relations with it.
- iv. China has strengthened military collaboration with Myanmar through mounting Myanmar's transport system and naval sectors.
- v. China has enhanced defense support to Sri Lanka and Bangladesh by developing strategic ports there and similarly, intensified the struggles to normalize its diplomatic relations with Bhutan.

Therefore, the US strategists have great concern by all these emphatic changes in China's policy towards South Asia. In fact, the US and China have similar type of interests in South Asia that's why, foreign policy of both the countries regarding this region has great significance for each other. As a consequence the US foreign policy in South Asia on the question of China is consisted of two elements: firstly, cooperating with China on the issues of regional and global peace and security without mobilizing the side of the expanse of the US interests or strategic domination. Secondly,

Enhancing Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) with Chinese military but also acting to comprehend its military expansionism (perceived or actual).

US Policy towards South Asia

Cold War Period:

The U.S. foreign policy in any specific region of the world is affected by multiple factors, which may be defined as the US interests attached with a specific region, the devotion, sum and quality of information provided at different levels of government, the restrictions that occur in the U.S. government and the limitations imposed by the State and non-state actors of that particular region. Therefore, the U.S. interests in any region of the world are determined by way of these patterns. In this context, the U.S. foreign policy concerning South Asia has witnessed a number of ups and downs and several phases of engagement and disengagement. After WWII the U.S. interests were centralized to the Persian Gulf, the Caribbean or in East Asia because of their oil resources, vast trade and geographic proximity. At same time, the US trade and investment in the South Asia was insignificant as the market, resources and location of this region had no attraction for the US interests¹⁸. Hence, during the Cold War era, the only determining factor of US policy regarding South Asia was to prevent this region from absorption into the communist bloc¹⁹. As a result, only geostrategic worth in the early stage of Cold War, the US showed some association with regional security of South Asia. In this framework, the US policy makers assumed that India was not capable to perform a leading role against communism in South Asia. Unlike this, Pakistan's image in the eyes of U.S. was positive to cope with this problem owing to its religious empathy towards Middle Eastern Muslim countries, its geographical propinquity to oil rich countries of Persian Gulf, its anti communist philosophy and particularly its policy to create balance of power with India were definitely a great source of attraction for Washington towards Pakistan. Consequently, the US enhanced its military as well as air alliance with Pakistan which was strictly criticized and opposed by India. The US military aid to Pakistan isolated India and

therefore, it activated India to gain the sympathies of Soviet Union.

On the other hand, due to certain global changes, within the South Asia during the period of late 1960s, the US shifted its policy from engagement to disengagement in the region. The leading global factors of this move were the development of the Vietnam War, Sino-Soviet rift and the beginning of oil diplomacy²⁰. As result of this disengagement from South Asia, the US remained neutral during the Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971. However, this neutrality faced inordinate challenges in the Indo-Pak War of 1971, as the Soviet-India Partnership and the Treaty of 1971 compelled the US as well as China to remain neutral during wars²¹. Besides this, some other factors also strengthened the arguments of those who favored the US policy of disengagement from the South Asia. The notion behind these arguments was that Russia has assumed the responsibility to maintain India's security; this would not only be helpful in containing Chinese pressure but also creating a rift between Sino-Soviet relations which was not bad for US interests. They also argued that the region has a very low profile of economic development and trade investment therefore, it cannot prove affective in flourishing the US economic interests. Furthermore, the weapons that had been provided by the US to the South Asian countries, for checking the communist expansionism, are often used by these countries against each other. So these were the factors which forced the US to carry on the policy of disengagement towards South Asia.

However, the U.S. policy of disengagement brought to an end with the invasion of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The arrival of Soviet Union in Afghanistan repeated the terror of communism in Western countries. Pakistan played a vanguard role in the US war for overthrowing communists from Afghanistan. Hence the stated narrative clarifies that the US policy for South Asia during the Cold War period has not remained consistent and durable for a long term. Furthermore, The US has viewed South Asia on the basis of its global

strategic and material interests therefore; it interpreted regional conflicts mostly from global angles.

Post-Cold War Period

The halt of Afghan War in 1989 and the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 brought to an end a long era of Cold War. This major development not only altered all patterns of relationships among the nations but also the landscape of entire world politics. Thus, with this new strategic scenario, Washington reformed regional, global as well as bilateral relations not just with South Asia, but with the entire world. The post-Cold War US foreign policy demanded a new assessment about engagement and disengagement in South Asia. Guihong Zhang states that with the culmination of Cold War, the US policy regarding South Asia had required two main changes²². First, as the Soviet Union was no longer capable to remain a paramount actor in South Asia, so the US recognized the regional importance of Sub-Continent and started to treat India and Pakistan in a different way by understanding the vitality of these countries. Second, the US identified that the dangers to its interests in South Asia does not emerge from outside the region but rather inside. Therefore, these threats can be overcome by promoting democratic values, non-proliferation and economic liberalization in the region. In addition, Cohen and Dasgupta argued that after the end of Cold War epoch the US had following identifiable interests in South Asia²³.

- i. Strengthening economic as well as strategic ties with India.
- ii. Safeguarding Pakistan's integrity for maintaining peace in South Asia.
- iii. Limiting the activities of Islamic extremists.
- iv. Curbing terrorism in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- v. Inhibiting the possibly precarious arms race in the region.
- vi. Encouraging peace process between Pakistan and India involving Kashmir dispute.

Consequently, during the first phase of post Cold War era the US extremely felt the significance of South Asia. As a result, in 1992, the South Asia Bureau was established in the Department

of State (DoS), and it was responsible for enhancing relation with South Asian countries. The robust steps of this Bureau categorically improved the US involvement in the region. Similarly, National Security Policy Review of South Asia was conducted in early 1997 as it made possible the US president's visit in March 2000. It was a historic event as it was the first presidential tour to South Asia in over two decades. It must not be ignored that President Clinton did not give much importance to South Asia in early phase of his regime, but from 1994, he changed his strategy about this region and boosted the economic and military relations with India and Pakistan. President Clinton adopted the policy of previous Governments and endeavored to check India and Pakistan from acquiring nuclear armaments. He also stressed upon both the countries to resolve Kashmir problem.

After 1994, President Clinton started his efforts to promote Indo-US relationship on the base of several reasons. David S. Chou has explained these reasons in such a way that the dismemberment of Soviet Union had compelled India and U.S. to review their foreign policies²⁴. On one hand, India had no option to use Moscow as an alternate to Washington but on the other hand, the importance of India as compare to Pakistan with respect to the US policy makers was expressively increased after this disintegration. The main notion behind this theory was that being the major stakeholder in South Asia, India could prove more effective than Pakistan in sustaining peace and security of the region. Being vast market for the US goods, capital, and technology, the Washington could not underestimate the economic significance of India. Furthermore, as for as Clinton Administration was concerned, geopolitical status of India was much more than Pakistan because strategically the US considered, India has a strong counter weight to China in spite of the fact that the US encouraged a strategic partnership with China also.

These were the factors which played a pivotal role in softening the hearts of U.S. policy makers towards India than Pakistan. In addition, the U.S. government, during this period, also made considerable efforts to prevent both India and Pakistan from

proliferating mass destruction weapons. All these efforts proved in vain, when on 11 May, 1998 India conducted nuclear tests and on 28 May, Pakistan also set off five nuclear devices; followed by further tests on 30 May in response of India's tests. The Clinton administration, contrary to these tests, imposed economic and military sanctions against both countries. However on 15 July, 1998, the Congress passed Brownback Amendment in which sanctions were relaxed on both of these countries because these sanctions did not prove successful in changing nuclear strategy of India and Pakistan²⁵. Thus it is very clear that nuclear policy of Clinton administrations in South Asia could not bound India and Pakistan from conducting further tests in future.

Like Clinton administration, the G.W. Bush as the President of U.S. also decided to carry on the policy of "India First" keeping in view India's rising economy and its emergence as global market. As a result of these developments; the Bush administration was seen very active for improving its economic as well as strategic relations with India. As for as the US policy towards China was concerned, the Bush administration did not treat China as a strategic partner and declared it as a strategic challenger, despite the fact that, the Clinton administration was the supporter of establishing good relations with China. The Bush administration also considered China as a main rival of the US interests in South Asia; therefore, China was taken as a key part in Bush's policy regarding this region. The general perception of Bush administration was that only India could prove a better option for countering weight to China. The main logic behind this perception was that China and India were confronting each other for several decades on account of their serious border disputes consequently; it was natural decision of Bush administration to support India with the intention of forming durable strategic coalition against China. Similarly, for cementing the strategic relations with India; the Bush administration not only relaxed the non-proliferation policy in South Asia but also lifted those sanctions which were imposed by the US on India and Pakistan after nuclear tests.

Post September 11 Period

The situation after terrorist assaults on World Trade Centre and Pentagon on 11 September, 2001 enforced the US to revise all the objectives of its foreign policy²⁶. The global war against terrorism emerged as the only strategic objective of the US foreign policy and all other priorities including the "China threat" were ignored. As said by Christina Rocca the Assistant Secretary for South Asia in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in March, 2004, that the core objective of U.S. foreign policy concerning South Asia would be combat terrorism and the eliminating those circumstances that promote terror in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Thus it is very clear that the situation after September 11 changed the dynamics of whole world and specifically of South Asia. The said incident made Pakistan the centre stage of whole U.S. foreign policy in South Asian region. In this regard, two factors contributed very much in mounting Pakistan's importance in the U.S. policy. First, the close geographical affinity between Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as good diplomatic relation of Pakistan with the Taliban government attracted Washington towards Islamabad. Second, the possible threats imposed by terrorism in Pakistan also motivated the U.S. to promote its strategic ties with Pakistan²⁷. Thus the U.S. and Pakistan expanded their collaboration which mainly aimed at enhancing the capability of Pakistan's law enforcement agencies for countering terrorism and coordinating the activities of intelligence agencies for tracing out the terrorists of Al-Qaeda and other terrorist's organizations within Pakistan and particularly along with Pak-Afghan border. Thus after September 11, Pakistan's role as frontline State in war against terrorism affirmed wrong the Clinton's policy of declaring Pakistan as a failing state and India as the hegemonic state in South Asia.

Moreover, the situation after September 11, Pakistan's role in war against terrorism in Afghanistan compelled the U.S. to recognize the frontline status of Pakistan. The growing cooperation of U.S. with Pakistan created a gulf between Indo-U.S. relations for a short period; however, this gap did not affect long term joint trade, commercial interests and security cooperation between U.S. and India.

Rebalancing Strategy of Obama Administration

It was the general perception of Obama's Government that after the rising importance of South Asia, the U.S. would have to apply certain implications in its policy. Consequently, the Obama's administration reviewed his strategy with a purpose to develop the U.S. links with the region at different imperative levels. The main purpose of this strategy is to support the rise of prosperous and peaceful Asia. A dynamic and prosperous Asia, integrated with the global economy is central to the U.S. interests particularly to the U.S. economy. In this context, expanding the rebalancing to include South Asia is not just indispensable, it is also vital in the U.S. foreign policy calculations. The significance of South Asia lies in the fact that a peaceful and stable South Asia that joins East Asia's production networks will offer counter point to the predominance of China's economic expansion in the region and produce additional impetus and resilience to Asia's rise. Thus, by extending the strategic rebalancing to South Asia, the U.S. indicates a timely signal to its long term commitment to the region.

China-India Policy

The U.S. foreign policy with respect to South Asia under Obama administration did not display any change and sustained the policies of his predecessor in preserving regional stability as well as the U.S. domination in South Asia. On the one hand, corresponding to this strategy, the Obama administration carried on its policy of forging a cooperative relationship with China but simultaneously remained energetic for tackling its rising military power while on the other hand, the U.S. maintained a good strategic partnership with India²⁸. Obama like Bush administration considered India as an emerging power of South Asia in 21st century. It was because of this reason that the Bush administration in his term, conferred de-facto recognition of India's getting hold of nuclear weapons and afterwards both countries expanded their cooperation in various fields like economics, defense and security etc. Similarly, Obama administration in spite of understanding Pakistan's importance as a frontline partner in the war against terrorism continued a decent strategic partnership p with India.

Obama's Policy for Afghanistan and Pakistan

The first foreign policy initiative that Obama carried out just after assuming office as President of U.S. in 2009 was to handle the declining situation along with the Afghanistan and Pakistan border region. As this area had a historic connotation due to its porous land and it known as the safe haven for the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other related terrorist organizations²⁹. Obama had also assured during his election campaigns to resolve 'Pak-Afghan' border issues at priority bases so therefore, Obama soon after holding office as President, decided to create the post of special envoy for the 'Pak-Afghan' region. The U.S. also reviewed its foreign policy and strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan which demanded a deep U.S. approach towards both these countries. Furthermore, the U.S. decided to keep the security agenda of this region at top priority in its foreign policy. In Afghanistan, the main focus of the U.S. and International Security Assistance Forces was limited to the training of the Afghan National Security Forces (ISAFs) so that Afghanistan may able to maintain its security after the departure of the U.S. and international coalition forces. As for as Pakistan is concerned, the U.S. decided to focus on to counter-terrorism, non-proliferation and ensuring the security of Pakistan's atomic weapons.

The Changing Economic Landscape of South Asia and New Requirements of U.S. Foreign Policy

In the consequence of recent economic developments in South Asia, the strategic importance of this region has been totally altered. The whole world and particularly the U.S. are compelled to provide extraordinary significance to this region. The project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has spread a panic among international circle due to its strategic vitality. As the U.S. considers itself as a main stakeholder and strategic rival of China in this region therefore, the U.S. has lot of worries regarding this project.

A revolutionary measure in the field of economic has been appreciated through CPEC. In order to develop infrastructure and to overcome energy crises China is ready to invest \$46 billion in Pakistan. Pakistan's rebalancing options from

geopolitics to geo-economics is being converted through this multi dimensional project. The geopolitical position of the region is gradually converted into favor of China instead of USA. Resultantly, the existing position of the region, with the development of CPEC and countering terrorism, is a big challenge for the US to maintain its position in the region. The CPEC is seemed like a binding force that is going to integrate the regional countries through economic incentives.

Chinese expansionism with the vision of reconstruction of ancient Silk Road under the new 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) initiative is going to weaken the strategic position of Washington in South Asia. It would connect Asia, Africa, Europe and important points in Eurasia. If China fully implements this project as like American base Marshall Plan of 1947, this region will become the hub of all economic activities of the world. This was definitely unwelcome news for the United States, who had a cautious concern on both countries, but there was no way for Washington to directly intervene. Consequently, the big requirements of the US in the 21st century are

- i. To counter terrorism and strategic rebalancing in the region
- ii. To maintain its image and strong hold on the region with the help of economic initiative as it will be parallel strategy to counter CPEC
- iii. To build up Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) between Pakistan and India

Another major economic development which has intensified the importance of this region is the Iranian Chabahar Port. The port basically, is a project between Iran and India which aims at constructing a sea port in Chabahar the Iranian region. The port is located in Iran next to the Gulf of Oman and at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz.



Source <http://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2013/dec/09/iran-south-asia-1-> Pakistan% E2% 80% 99s-delicate-balancing-act

It is the only Iranian port with direct access to the Indian Ocean. It is located in close proximity to Afghanistan and the Central Asian countries of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan; it has been termed as the Golden Gate to these landlocked countries. In terms of distance Chabahar is 700km away from the capital of Baluchistan province, 950 km away from Milak, the closest city of Afghanistan and 1827 Km from Turkmenistan border. In terms of sea distances the Pakistani port of Gwadar is 84 km away from Chabahar, Dubai is 565 Km, Karachi is 728 Km, and Mumbai is 1349 Km from Chabahar. The port is definitely an opportunity for Iran, Afghanistan and India. It's also an opening to the sea for the landlocked countries of Central Asia. Located close to Gwadar, it provides India an avenue to extend its reach and contest the emergence of China as the predominant influence in the region.

Revival of Cold War

The US-Russia tensions are increasing as both countries are confronting each other in Syrian civil war. The Russia is backing Syrian Government while the U.S. has showed its full sympathies with democratic forces like Syrian opposition and

assured full logistic support in order to establish a democratic government in Syria. This daunting situation can cause the revival of cold war between two countries. Being a territorial proximity and close strategic ties of Russia with all major South Asian States the region is representing a battle ground for super powers.

Conclusion

It can be asserted from the above debate on the U.S. foreign policy for South Asia since the Cold War era to 21st century, that U.S. has always treated this region on the bases of its vital strategic as well as economic interests which has remained dynamics and oscillated with lot of ups and downs or engagements and disengagements in this region. The strategic interests have no doubt played a dominant role in the formulations of its foreign policy in South Asia. In fact, the U.S. foreign policy in any part of the region does not like influence of any other power except itself. In the 21st century, the U.S. policy formulators observe China in that perspective in which Soviet Union was observed during the cold war era. Hence the U.S. will treat India as its mutual partner as long as the U.S. policy makers take China as a major threat for their wider global interests in South Asia. Simultaneously, as the terrorism is not yet eradicated from Afghanistan and peace as well as stability of the country has not been maintained therefore, the U.S. will endeavor to uphold its current balanced policy in both India and Pakistan. However, after changing economic scenario of South Asia, keeping in view the increasingly disturbing condition of the U.S. relations with Russia, the U.S. will have to overview its foreign policy towards South Asian region. Chinese growing pace in the region is going to be proved that the US needs to replace its realistic approach with economic one.

References

- ¹- Worldometer, *Southern Asia Population*, Accessed, May 15, 2017
<http://www.worldometers.info/world-population/southern-asia-population>
- ²- Ganguly Shivaji, *U.S. Policy towards South Asia*, Westview Press, Boulder Co., 27 (1990).
- ³- Inderfurth Karl F., U.S.-India Relations, in *America's Role in Asia: Asian and American Views*, Report prepared by The Asia Foundation, 253-269 (2008)
- ⁴- Kishore Madhubani, *The New Asian Hemisphere The Irresistable Shift of Global Power to the East*, (Public Affairs: New York, 2008).
- ⁵- Tomislav Delinic Nishchal N. Pandey, *SAARC: Towards Meaningful Cooperation*, (Modern Printing Press Kathmandu, Nepal 2012)
- ⁶- Ashley Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2001)
- ⁷- Volha Charnysh, Pakistan's Nuclear Program, Nuclear age Peace Foundation accessed 13 May, 2017
http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/issues/proliferation/pakistan/charnysh_pakistan_analysis.pdf
- ⁸- Blood Peter R., *Indo-U.S. Relations*, CRS Issue Brief for Congress, Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division, 6-5 (2002).
- ⁹- Jain Rashmi (ed.), *The United States and Pakistan 1947-2006*, (Radiant Publishers, New Delhi, 2007)
- ¹⁰- Volha Charnysh, Pakistan's Nuclear Program, Nuclear age Peace Foundation accessed 13 May, 2017
http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/key-issues/nuclear-weapons/issues/proliferation/pakistan/charnysh_pakistan_analysis.pdf
- ¹¹- Doug Bereuter, America's Role in Asia Asian and American Views, *The Asia Foundation* accessed 26 February 2017
<http://www.asiafoundation.org/resources/pdfs/AmericasRoleinAsia2008.pdf>
- ¹²- George Perkovich, *Toward Realistic US India Relations*, Washington, D.C. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2010.

- ¹³- K. Alan Kronstadt, Pakistan-U.S. Relations: A Summary, Congressional Research Service accessed 1 June, 2017
http://www.operationspaix.net/Data/Document/136~v~Pakistan_US_Relations_A_Summary.pdf
- ¹⁴- Kenneth Katzman, Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy, Congressional Research Service accessed 29 May, 2017
<https://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf>
- ¹⁵- Xun Sun, New Nuclear Triangle and China's Role in South Asia, *RCSS Policy Studies* 32, Colombo, 19 (2005)
- ¹⁶- Malik J. Mohan, South Asia in China's Foreign Relations, *Pacific Review*, 13(1), 73-90 (2001)
- ¹⁷- Hassan Saadat, Indo-U.S. Nuclear/Strategic Cooperation: Chinese Response, *Strategic Studies*, xxxi(4), 44-88 (2012)
- ¹⁸- Alexander Evans, *The United States And South Asia After Afghanistan*, (The Asia Society New York 2012).
- ¹⁹- Kochanek Stanely A., "The U.S. Foreign Policy in South Asia", *Pakistan Horizon*, 46 (3), 19 (1993).
- ²⁰- Robert J. McMahon, United States Cold War Strategy in South Asia: Making a Military Commitment to Pakistan, 1947-1954, *The Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (1988): 812-40.
- ²¹- Chou David S., U.S. Policy towards India and Pakistan in the Post Cold War, *Tamking Journal of International Relations*, 8(3), 27-56 (2005)
- ²²- Guihong Zhang, U.S. Security Policy towards South Asia after September 11 and its Implications for China: A Chinese Perspective, *Strategic Analysis*, 27(2) (2003)
- ²³- Cohen Stephen P. and Sunil Dasgupta, *U.S.-South Asia: Relations under Bush*, Brookings Oxford, Analttica, 2 (2001)
- ²⁴- Chou David S., U.S. Policy towards India and Pakistan in the Post Cold War, *Tamking Journal of International Relations*, 8(3), 27-56 (2005).
- ²⁵- Rajesh Rajagopalan, Atul Mishra, *Nuclear South Asia: Keywords and Concepts*, Abingdon Rutledge 2015.
- ²⁶- Naftali, Timothy, *Blind Spot : The Secret History of American Counterterrorism*, New York: Basic Books. 2006.

- ²⁷ - Rudolph Lloyd I. and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, The Making of Foreign Policy for South Asia: Offshore Balancing in Historical Perspective, *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(8), 703-709 (2006).
- ²⁸ - Daniel Twining, "Diplomatic Negligence: The Obama Administration Fumbles Relations With India," *Weekly Standard*, May 10, 2010.
- ²⁹ - Mark Landler, "The Afghan War and the Evolution of Obama", accessed 3 June 2017 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/01/world/asia/obama-afghanistan-war.html?mcubz=1>.