

## **INDO-US STRAINED RELATIONSHIP DURING COLD WAR**

**Balwinder Singh\***

---

### **Abstract:**

The present study is to a certain extent important because of the Cold War era, Indo-US relationship has been marked by so many ups and downs. Significantly, there has been steady improvement in Indo-US relations in the post-Cold War era. The paper deals historical perspective of Indo-US relations. It also explains the Indo-US bilateral relations vis-à-vis to strategic implications. It further explains the strategic reasons of Indo-US rivalry during the Cold War environment. The study tries to explore the causes of bitter relationship between India and the US during Cold War years.

**Key Words- Cold War, Strained, Relationship, Differences.**

### **Backdrop**

India and the US have had historical contacts and longstanding relationship, but the formal relationship between the two countries was started during the Second World War. During this time, the US was encountered several security challenges from Japan. The US stressed Britain to sort-out India's independence issue as early as possible. Consequently, the then US President Churchill approached India because US perceived India's importance to counter Japan influence in Asia. Because of this, Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi supported US-UK axis during the Second World War-torn situation. But this conditional relationship between India and the US was not continued long times. With the end of Second World War, the US did not consider India's security and economic concerns.

Indo-US relations have many ups and downs especially in the Cold War era (1945-1990). During Indo-Sino war (1962), the then US President Kennedy had supported India while in Indo-Pak wars of 1965 and 1971, the US had criticized India's role and openly supported Pakistan. When India conducted a nuclear explosion in 1974, the US with their counterpart (western European countries) imposed strong economic and nuclear sanctions against India. Pakistan-US security relations and India-USSR strategic partnership had further deteriorated the Indo-US bilateral relations. Moreover, India's Non-alignment policy was not liked by the US. Thus, the US was strategically in opposite camp to India throughout the ideological clashes of two superpowers (US and USSR) in the Cold War.

### **Why Indo-US Strained Relationship during Cold War**

Yet, both India and the US are the same democratic profile, India is the largest democracy and the US is the oldest democracy in the world. But it is not necessary that the only democracy had proved to get-better relationship among two nations. India and the US have had a slow-moving relationship ever since India's Independence. For the duration of the Cold War period, the relationship between the two countries has witnessed several ups and downs. But in fact, there were more downs

---

\*Assistant Professor of Political Science, C.G.M. College, Mohlan

than ups. Because, Americans had an indistinguishable attraction with India's political culture and on the other hand, Indian potential establishment had little practical experience of American political and strategic work culture. As well as, America did not support India's stance of Non-Alignment. It is widely considered that the US intellectuals, academicians and Washington based policy makers were not positive towards India's adherence with Non-Alignment Movement. Moreover, American policy-makers openly criticized India's soft stand towards socialism. India did not support US containment strategy and therefore Washington adopted anti-India line on Kashmir and other issues. In this segment there was a short period when Washington was supported India during Indo-Sino war in 1962 due to growing Chinese military aggression on India. At that time, the Kennedy administration provided limited aid to India. It was because that, the Kennedy administration considered India as a tool to contain communism.

Due to the unfriendly relations between President Nixon and PM Indira, Indo-US relations could not be healthy. As a result, the Nixon administration had adopted a pro-Pakistan approach and openly supported Pakistan in Indo-Pak war in 1971. The Johnson administration adopted an anti-Indian stance on the issue of nuclear non-proliferation and imposed an embargo to sell arms to India in 1979. The Regan administration also sidelined India's security concerns in South Asia and marked Pakistan as a front-line state to contain communism in this region.

Despite being one of the founding members of the Non-alignment Movement, India wanted to develop balanced relationship with both super powers during the Cold War period. But this was not endorsed by the United States policy-makers. The United States closeness with Pakistan was the main hindrance of Indo-US amicable bilateral relations. The strained relationship was primarily due to their conflicting perspectives and divergent approach towards various issues, such as the United States attitude towards Communism, increasing India-Soviet Union strategic relations and the US support to Pakistan in Indo-Pak wars during the Cold War. During the Cold War period US's policy of intervention; the US support to Pakistan on Kashmir issue; India-Soviet Union treaty of friendship (1971) had negatively affected Indo-US relationship. Moreover, the US-Pakistan-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) collaborations and the US warm relationship with Pakistan had further affected Indo-US bilateral relations. After 1974 Pokhran-I nuclear test, the US imposed sanctions against India and India stand on NPT had further worsened the relations with the US.

The United States interference in South Asian strategic environment and Soviet Union's intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 and United States military aid to Pakistan had changed the regional security. The United States stand on Pakistan sponsored terrorism was posed a security threats for South Asia in general and India in particular. During this period, the US ignored India's view on Kashmir issue and neglected infiltration policy of Pakistan in Indian administered Kashmir. So, Indo-US bilateral relations remained resentful during much the Cold War period.

With the end of Cold War in 1990, the bipolar military alliance based system was collapsed. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, India began to revise its foreign policy in accordance to new world order and took positive initiative to develop close relationship with the US. During the Cold War, Pakistan was the centre-point of the American South Asia policy. In the post Cold War era, due to change international environment, India has much more important for the US in South Asia. On the other hand, the United States supported India's efforts to privatize economy in this changed environment. In this changing scenario, the adoption of liberalization, privatization and globalization

by India create a new environment in their relationship to take off on a more robust note. This step was proved a remarkable progress in Indian economy extension and India's opening-up of the economy attracted the Americans and whole western world. So, due to India's economic rise, its emergence as an important market as well as a source of capital, United States realized that crossing the nuclear hump is key to access these.

The dissolution of Soviet Union brought about many changes in the global politics. It opened the new doors of cooperation between India and the US. Consequently, there was a major shift in the United States policy towards India. But, things changed tremendously after the disintegration of the Soviet Union and on the other hand, when Bill Clinton assumed office. Consequently, Pakistan lost its importance in the new political situation. The Soviet Union and Communism were no longer a threat to the America and its allies. So, Pakistan was wiped-out from the United States of America's strategic thinking, instead India came-up.

Besides this, Indo-US defence relations had touched new heights following the disintegration of the Soviet Union. India was adopted liberalize policy in 1991 to provoke the US for more investment in Indian defence modernization programme. In the post Cold War, India and the US started steady progress in defence sphere too. In this changed uni-polar international system, India needs a super-power country for strategic and economic support. Thus, India was compelled to develop strategic relations with the US. Therefore, India shifted its responsiveness towards Russia and started tilt towards the US. It is relying fact that India and the US relations have undergoing a strategic shift in uni-polar global architecture. Due to changing international environment, the US adopted a refined foreign policy towards South Asia. The US adopted equally-balance policy towards India and Pakistan. It was showed American shifting stand on Kashmir. In this changed scenario, the US recognized Kashmir as a bilateral problem between India and Pakistan and started abstained from the dialogue on Kashmir issue. India-China strained relations and the US-China strained relations were another reason of growing Indo-US strategic partnership.

### **Conclusion**

The study has provided an overview of complex Indo-US relationship during the Cold War. It is the fact that Indo-US had different strategic interests during Cold War years and it was caused the strain into the bilateral relationship. Thus, it can be said that the Cold War politics had badly affected Indo-US relationship.

### **REFERENCES**

- Nandy, D. (2015). Indo-USA Economic and Technological Cooperation: The Post Cold War Scenario (1991-2006). *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 3(1), 61-75.
- Dalal, K. L. (1996). Book Review: Non-Alignment As a Factor in Indo-American Relations—The Nehru Era.
- McMahon, R. J. (1996). *The Cold War on The Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*. Columbia University Press. New York.

Das, K. (2013). Indo-US Relations in Post Cold War Era and Concerns for Pakistan. *Political Economy Journal of India*, 22(2), 89.

Brown, W. N., & McKay, D. C. (1963). *The United States and India and Pakistan* (p. 34). Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Kux, D. (1994). *Estranged Democracies: India and the United States, 1941-1991*. SAGE Publications Pvt. Limited, California (US).

Kapur, S. P., & Ganguly, S. (2007). The Transformation of US-India Relations: An Explanation for the Rapprochement and Prospects for the Future. *Asian Survey*, 47(4), 642-656. Feldman, S. (1996). US Nuclear Non-proliferation Policy: Implications for US-Israeli Relations. *Israel Affairs*, 2(3-4), 184-197.

Khan, S. A. (2010). The Realist/Constructivist Paradigm: US Foreign Policy Towards Pakistan and India. *Strategic Studies*, 30(3 and 4).

Jha, N. K. (1994). Reviving US-India Friendship in a Changing International Order. *Asian Survey*, 34(12), 1035-1046.