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Indo-US Nuclear deal: Challenge for Pakistan

Fariha Jabeen

Ph.D Scholar,

Department of Politics and International Relations,

University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: aameefaro@gmail.com

Asia Saif Alvi

Assistant Professor,

Department of Politics and International Relations,

University of Sargodha, Punjab, Pakistan

Email: asalvi457@gmail.com

Abstract:

During the Cold War, Pakistan and India supported opposing blocs, with India firmly placing itself with the Soviets and Pakistan allying itself with the Western powers. (Gillani, 2021) (Ali, 2020). The break-up of the Soviet Union gave a chance to China for it to emerge as a challenger to US superiority. China's growing economy gave a direction to US policy towards the South Asian region and especially on India. India was also trying to be a hegemonic power in its region and a common enemy of Pakistan and China. The United States could only find India as an ally in South Asia to counter China's growing influence, as other countries in the region such as Pakistan already had security and economic ties with China. Another factor could be Washington's ambitions to expand its network of alliances in Asia, and the opportunity being provided by India to shelter US interests. There is a chain of events which change the multi-dimensional interests of big powers time to time. There is no permanent friend or enemy in International Relations can be seen practically in the case of USA, China, India and Pakistan. Indo-US Nuclear, economic and defensive deals started a competition and arms race in the region of South Asia especially between nuclear arch rivals India and Pakistan. Although China is an all-weather friend of Pakistan and Pakistan always enjoys favors from China, Pakistan also needs strong ties with the United States to level this disequilibrium. Similarly Pakistan is demanding same deals from USA to deter Indian Influence in South Asian region.

Keywords: US, India, Pakistan, nuclear deal, security Dilemma, arms race, hegemony, power politics

Introduction:

Interest-based Indo-US partnership is not only to strengthen bilateral relations but also to be influential in South Asia. Indo-US relations have developed into a global strategic partnership based on the promotion of democracy, regional and global issues. The strategic partnership will follow trade, defense, science and technology, civil nuclear technology, health, and education. America and India have shared strategic and economic interests. India wants to become a regional hegemon with US assistance whereas the US wants to contain increasing China's influence in South Asia and wants to sustain its military and economic supremacy over the whole world. The Indo-US strategic partnership would disturb the regional balance between Pakistan and India, and also affect China's interests in the South Asian region. Improving Sino-Pak ties is the ultimate solution to maintain the regional balance.

The United States of America wants to curb increasing Chinese influence in Asia. The motive behind the Indo-US strategic partnership is to contain China's developing economic progress, expanding economic market, and trade routes. The US is afraid of China's policy of trade routes and economic corridors which were expanding outside its borders to other regions especially South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Central Asia.

The prevailing conditions in South Asia forced Pakistan to engage in a strategic partnership with China owing to security needs. Therefore keeping in view the prevalent conditions, Pakistan has two options, first internally making the country durable through indigenous technology and second externally making reliable allies. (Ali Irfan2020)

Pakistan needs a reliable friend to strengthen its position in the region and to counter the increasing threat from its neighbour and arch rival India. These circumstances led to a strengthening in the relationship between China and Pakistan beginning with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). There is widespread agreement in the Pakistani populace that China is a time tested friend of Pakistan and always comes to its aid in times of difficulty whereas the US always uses Pakistan for the fulfillment of its own interests and has failed to show support on key issues such as the Kashmir Dispute between Pakistan and India. Increasing U.S – India ties not only serve as a threat to China and Pakistan but also undermine regional peace in South Asia and beyond.

During the early 1970s, India's relations with the Soviets improved due to the common goal of undermining Pakistan which was a firm ally of the US in context of the East Pakistan Crisis. India was therefore opposed by the United States during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War. Relations had boiled to the point that the Nixon Administration sent USS Enterprise under Task Force 74 when defeat in the East seemed certain for Pakistan. India had signed a Twenty-Year Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with the Soviet Union by setting aside her non-alignment policy. India remained a Soviet ally throughout the Cold War and relations with US remained on a low-ebb. In 1974, the first nuclear explosion of India sustained the gap between Indo-US relations for two decades. The US demanded an inspection of Indian nuclear facilities by IAEA after the nuclear explosion but India refused to do so. This refusal was followed with a US ban on nuclear assistance to India. Later on, Indira Gandhi visited the USA in 1982. She met with Reagan and requested to mend ties with the US by saying, "find a common area, how so ever small". The meeting ended with the restoration of blocked nuclear assistance and supply of uranium fuel for the Tarapur Nuclear Power Plant. The relationship again took a downturn in 1984 when a US based plant caused the deaths of thousands of Indian labor due to the leakage of toxic gas and chemicals. India wanted to extradite the chief executive of that plant but America refused.

However, conditions have changed after the Cold War. The US changed its preferences and strategies as the sole-superpower and looks to undermine its emerging competitors, especially in Asia. Therefore the US needs more allies in Asia to combat China, which is an emerging economic power. Policymakers in Washington soon discovered room to expand co-operation with New Delhi in a bid to improve relations. The US changed the policy and rules of the world nuclear regime to accommodate India. It facilitated India and declared her a responsible state and tried to integrate India with other nuclear states under the umbrella of nuclear peace. Pant argues that the Indo-US nuclear deal is "just a first step towards a future realignment of global power" (Harsh V.Pant, 2007).

Indo US relations are not the result of a sudden development. It is a perpetual, persistent, and interest-based relationship chain. Although meetings at different levels were conducted from time to time but planned and landmark bilateral relations began with the visit of Indian PM Man Mohan Singh in 2005.

History of Indian Nuclear Program

The Indian nuclear program was informally initiated in 1945 even before the Partition of the Subcontinent with the establishment of the research institute named Tata Institute of Foundation Research (TIFR). After the partition, Indian government under the leadership of PM Jawaharlal Nehru passed an Act IAEC in 1948. The Prime Minister was actively participating in international affairs and acknowledged the importance of defense and nuclear power. Nehru remarked about the Nuclear Program, "We must develop this atomic energy quite apart from war - indeed I think we must develop it to use it for peaceful purposes. ... Of course, if we are compelled as a nation to use it for other purposes, possibly no pious sentiments of any of us will stop the nation from using it that way." (Chengappa, 2000)

India established a Nuclear reactor to fulfill power energy requirements with the assistance of the US in 1950. The US provided fuel for energy programs and laboratory assistance as well. In 1956, the US supplied twenty one thousand kilograms of D₂ O water for a reactor under the umbrella of "Atoms For Peace", and the reactor was labeled the (CIRUS) as Canada-India Reactor, U.S (India's nuclear weapons program, 2001). Although the objective behind this reactor was peaceful, it later on gave path to the development of nuclear weapons. The Sino-Indian War of 1962 further extended the need for India to protect its borders from external aggression. Therefore India did not sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1968 due to its nuclear ambitions. The United States and India were both not signatories to the Non-Proliferation Treaty.

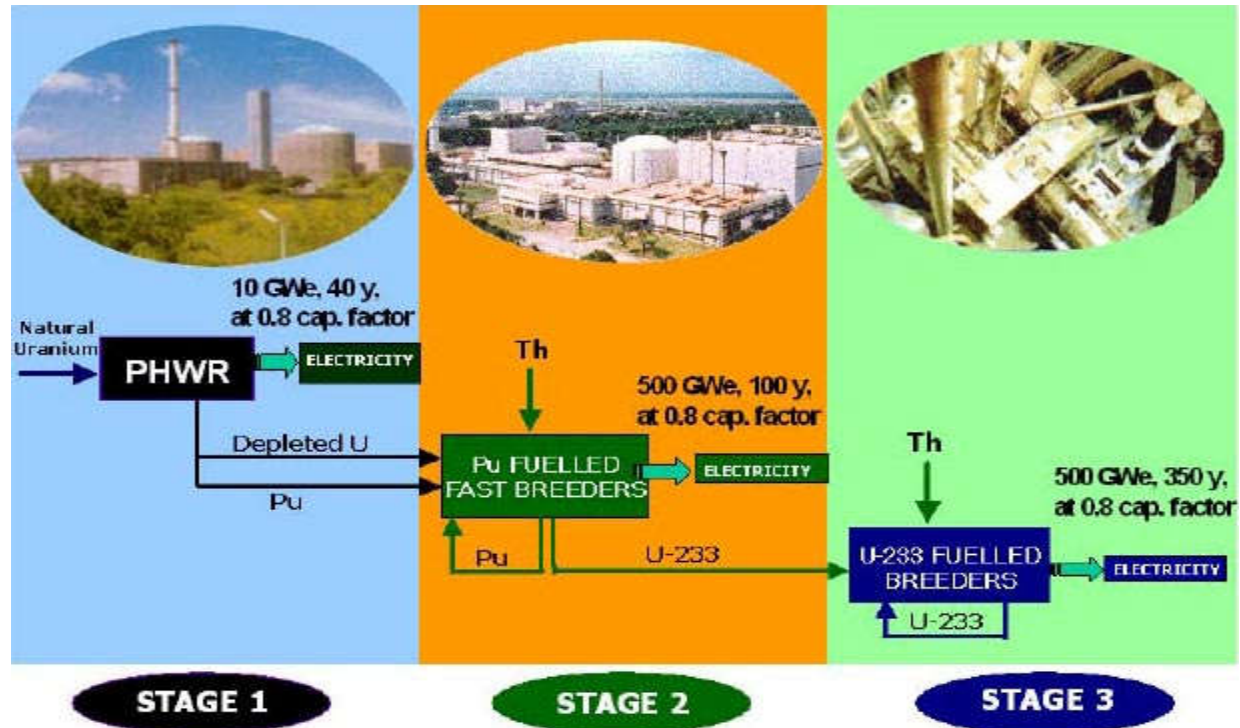
Steps of Indian Nuclear program

The Indian Nuclear program was divided into 3 different stages by Dr. Homi Baba in 1954 to achieve self-sufficiency in energy and utilization of uranium and thorium reserves.

Step 1. Pressurized Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs)

Step 2. Fast Breeding Reactors (FBRs)

Step 3. Breeding Reactors (BRs)



Kalpakkam has the unique distinction of being the only place in the world, where all the three fissile isotopes viz., U-235 [MAPS], Pu-239 [FBTR] & U-233 [KAMINI] are used as fuel in reactors.(Three stages of Indian nuclear programme,2016)

The First Indian Nuclear power plant was built in 1969 at Tarapur with the assistance of the USA.

Restraints in Indo-US Nuclear Deal:

The US-India nuclear deal was the result of perpetual and consistent meetings between high officials between the USA and India since 2000. It was finalized or shaped in 2005 during the visit of Indian PM Manmohan Singh to the USA. Before the visit in 2006, relations between the 2 nations had not been especially warm. There were different factors that had led to such a state of affairs. The Indian Nuclear explosion in 1974 was not welcomed by the US. Secondly, the Indians refused to sign the NPT, and open Indian opposition to IAEA led to a further winding down in relations between them. India faced some problems regarding the trade of nuclear technology, the supply of fuels for nuclear plants resulted in it failing to cope with its energy needs leading to an energy crisis. India experienced its first nuclear explosion in 1974 displaying that it could increase nuclear energy for passive commitments. As a result, the United States separated India for 25 years and refused nuclear assistance, and convinced other states to act the same with India. But India didn't bother about these hindrances and continued its nuclear program. India again had to bear the brunt of the US' anger in the form of a fuel suspension deal in the aftermath of the Second Nuclear explosion in 1988. The change in the attitude of the Bush administration was noticed by the international community as well.

The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, a think-tank of the US has presented a report about US alignment with India, According to the report America should take five steps:

a. America will help India to increase its military and economic power to deter china's increasing influence and power in Asia.

- b. The deceptive impression should be concluded about India-Pak military equivalence. Therefore India will be granted more assistance and help by USA to increase military power against Pakistan.
- c. The US will recommend and facilitate India in acquiring membership in the UNO Security Council, APEC, G-8 and International Atomic Energy Agency.
- d. The US will eradicate restrictions and allow the completion of the Iran-India gas pipeline plan.
- e. The US will permit the trade of two sided use of technology for example for nuclear peace and nuclear security weapons to India.

US-India Nuclear deal:

The Indo-US nuclear deal has become a part of the continuity of relations between the US and India since 2000. The United States of America was encouraged to make a "strategic partnership" with India by mounting collaboration in the field of space flight, satellite technology, and missile defense. The US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice visited Delhi in March 2005 and stated during the visit that, "President Bush very much values to enhance the relationship between the US and India, the fact that we are becoming in many ways important global as well as regional partners".

The visit of Indian PM Manmohan Singh in 2005 to the USA was the restoration of dormant relations between both states. A combined statement was issued by US President and Indian PM. The Indian Prime Minister said, "We have had a very positive and fruitful meeting and the issue has been tackled in a way that gives me great contentment". The US President and Indian Prime Minister expressed great trust in each other and focused on the more positive aspects of the relationship between India and America. Both stressed on its strength and hoped it would improve day by day. According to the statement, both states will try to strengthen bilateral and close relations in four different fields. Firstly, politically India will join the US bandwagon of democracy and actively participate in spreading it globally. Secondly, economic assistance of the US will help out India in developing its economy and trade. Thirdly, military assistance between both states will be helpful in modernizing India's military. Lastly, US Nuclear cooperation will help not only in the field of peace and energy but also strengthen the position of India in the South Asian region to counter China's hegemonic power.

Later on, this agreement was known 123 Agreement and got approval after 3 years under section 123 of AAEA (American Atomic Energy Act 1954). After this deal, India was given the freehand by NSG (Nuclear Supplier Group) with the support of America to sign commerce deals with any other country. According to the Charles D. Ferguson, "It is an unprecedented deal for India,". US President Bush visited India in 2006 and showed his trust in the Indian Government to improve bilateral relations. In July 2006, the House of Representatives passed the Hyde Act. In August 2007, both governments released 123 agreements. On 8th October Indo-US nuclear agreement become Law after the signature of President Bush. The main points of the agreement are:

- a. India sited 14 out of 22 nuclear reactors under the protection of the IAEA.
- b. The USA will provide full civil nuclear cooperation to India.
- c. Nuclear fuel will be provided to India for nuclear reactors.
- d. Transfer of Arsenal material, energy-related technology, and its trade will be possible under the protection of IAEA.
- e. Although India under the deal decided to separate its citizen and military facilities in return for full civilian nuclear energy collaboration from the United States. (Nawaz, 2007).

Benefits for India

In 2005, Ashley J. Tellis, an Indian-American expert on US-India relations declared "India as a new global Power" (Tellis, 2005). The US aims to improve geo-strategic ties between Delhi and Washington in its bid to provide nuclear assistance to India, engage in arms transactions and modernize India's military. According to the Indo-US nuclear deal, India will enjoy the same benefits without signing NPT which were given to the big five nuclear states. It meant that the US recognizes India as a nuclear power. According to this Indo-US deal, India will get nuclear assistance globally. US President Bush reformed the longstanding American policy towards India and declared it a legal nuclear power, finishing New Delhi's 30-year quest for such acknowledgment (Carter, 2006).

India has a shortage of uranium, an element crucial to its civil nuclear program as a basic requirement giving a rise to the need to import. Due to US support, India will import uranium from other countries like Australia, Canada,

France, Russia, and Kazakhstan. According to Daryl G. Kimball, nuclear fuel sales to India for Indian power reactors may be marginally helpful in increasing India's energy output, but at the same time it will free up India's limited domestic uranium supplies to be used exclusively for bomb-making" (Kimball, 2016). Another benefit of the Indo-US nuclear deal was that India joined export control groups like the Australian group. It is roughly estimated that India has 7800 metric tons of fuel imported from 2008 to 2018.

Indo-US strategic relations have grown immensely in 2019. Both countries signed an agreement in Washington in 2019 regarding transaction of weapons. Indo-US strategic collaboration has continued with US President Donald Trump's visit to India in February 2020. Both leaders of Indo-US strategic partnership promised to strengthen their relations by transforming the current strategic partnership into a Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership known as CGSP. And both leaders issued their consent in which President Trump and PM Modi affirmed their willingness over strengthening Indo-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership (Ali, 2020).

According to Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership (CGSP), both the President of the United States and PM of India decided to expand security and defense assistance. Additionally, they devoted to working collectively to improve relations between the two for worldwide control and strategic collaboration from Asia to Pacific. Under the umbrella of CGSP, President Trump has granted support to India in providing advanced military technology. Similarly, both states signed a defense deal worth three billion dollars and President Trump showed his inclination to provide platforms for sale of Indian modern defense equipment in the global market. Similarly, the leadership of both states promised to enhance assistance in several grounds to extend their defensive and security partnership. In addition, the President Trump and PM Modi promised to strength nautical and space cognizance relationship. The leadership of India and America acknowledged the need to increase their support in the field of exchange of military troops, security, cyberspace, energy, science and technology, educational programs and trade ties.

Challenges for Pakistan

The Indo-US nuclear deal will affect South Asia regionally and China internationally. Regionally it will directly affect Pakistan, the neighbor of India to its West. India received about 5 billion dollars from the US to buy conventional weapons. This transaction of conventional weapons will directly affect confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan. Such circumstances will increase the arms race and create disequilibrium of power between Pakistan and India.

America has relations with Pakistan and India at different interest levels. On one side Pakistan is a Major Non-NATO ally of America in the war against terrorism and on the other side America is making nuclear and strategic partnerships with Pakistan's arch-rival India. So Pakistan has been treated only as a planned companion of America whereas India has become a strategic partner. US double standard policy shows how the US utilized Pakistan in Afghanistan in the war against terrorism and supported India in enhancing its power. This favoritism will create a nuclear race between the 2 nuclear neighboring competitors. Blackwill says, "My impression is that [the Pakistanis] are worried this will feed the Indian nuclear weapons program and therefore weaken deterrence." (Bajoria, 2010).

If we look at the last decade, India had bought arms from other countries worth a 100 billion dollars and 66% of arms are deployed for use against Pakistan. The US had earlier applied unbearable sanctions on Pakistan for the transfer and purchase of nuclear technology with other countries in the aftermath of the Chagai nuclear tests.

US policymakers think of India as a viable rampart towards the hazards from Pakistan. Strategic collaboration between Pakistan and China has remained perilous for the US-India relationship. Indo-US ties have some obligations regarding China providing Pakistan the most innovative weaponries systems that will be aggressive not only for Indian stability but also for US domination (Nicolas, 2005). Pakistan is stimulated by the Indo-US nuclear deal to make nuclear ties with China and the NSG will not be in the position to condemn Pakistan-China Nuclear collaboration.

The transfer of PAC-3 to India will enhance mistrust in India. A PAC-3 holds a smaller but long-range missile technology. It will push Pakistan to build a parallel anti-missile system with the help of China for its survival. Pakistan is stepping up to increase the production of uranium and plutonium for its nuclear arsenal owing to these new defensive needs.

Freshly, India has conducted a successful test of the Anti-Ballistic Missile system by American support. It will force Pakistan to look for a counter measure and will indulge both countries Pakistan and India in an arms competition which would be more harmful to Pakistan's economic development than India.

According to the Pakistani analyst Momin Iftikhar, "India utilized 11% of various available energy sources including oil, gas, coal, wind and nuclear power for producing electricity. Out of this only 2-3% is produced through nuclear power. The civil nuclear cooperation agreement, once materialized in its true essence by 2025 could increase this production to a maximum of 6.5 - 8% only. Therefore, it is not clear how this increase of 4.5 - 6% in nuclear electricity could make any substantial difference in global climatic conditions or the Indian economy." (Iftikhar, 2006). There are more chances that India will alter her direction from peaceful nuclear program to defensive nuclear weapons by diverting her expertise of producing cheap, efficient and clean energy towards its planned nuclear weapons program.

Conclusion:

Unstable economic conditions, political instability, sectarian violence, and the activities of terrorist organizations undermine Pakistan's ability to provide initiatives to nuclear suppliers especially when compared with India. Historical events between Pakistan and India show the bitter rivalry that has existed between the two countries. Both states have been in competition with each other in an array of fields vying for an upper hand over the other. This competition became much more intensive with the Indian nuclear explosion in 1974 and added a nuclear aspect to the existing political rivalry. India's nuclear explosion alerted Pakistan. Pakistan also built a nuclear plant and competition started in the form of an arms race meant to upset the balance of power between Pakistan and India. The current Indo-US nuclear deal would add fuel to fire in terms of the bitter Indo-Pak rivalry by plunging both nations into a nuclear arms race.

The power game between the US, India, and China will enhance the importance of Pakistan not only regionally but also internationally. Pakistan has to wait for the changing scenario and states will offer Pakistan favorable conditions. China will cash the Indian exemption from NSG. There will be many options for China and Pakistan to establish ties not only pertaining to economic matters but those covering the fields of nuclear weapons, science and technology, education, trade routes etc.

The deterrence stability in South Asia would be impacted negatively because of the Indo-US Nuclear deal as it would provide the Indians with an undue qualitative and quantitative edge. Keeping in view these security concerns, Pakistan has to move into nuclear alliances with China, North Korea, and Iran. Pakistan's image at the international level is already tarnished because of the transfer of nuclear technology to other states by A.Q Khan. Although safety measures of nuclear technology were taken by Pakistan to restore its position and USA showed satisfaction over them but the US is still not in a favorable position to establish nuclear relations with Pakistan.

Pakistan is also strategically important for the USA due to its status as a Major non-NATO ally in the war against terrorism. It is also extremely important for the peace and stability of South Asia, especially in terms of Afghanistan. Stability in South Asia would not come through an Arms Race and the development of nuclear weapons but through enhancement in trade, normalization of bilateral relations, solving mutual issues, and minimizing conflict creating incentives.

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