Indo-US Relations: An Overview of a Strategic Partnership
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Indo-American relations gained momentum during the second term of the Clinton Administration. As the twenty-first century dawned, the successive Bush regime made constant efforts to sustain the growing momentum in ties and placed added emphasis on taking it to a higher level. The factors which have played a prominent role in the burgeoning relations between the two countries are of bilateral and global significance.

Meeting of Democracies

The United States is the world’s oldest democracy filled with institutions representing the ideals of democratic liberalism. Concepts like the separation of power, checks and balances and residuary powers are seeped in its system over two centuries of evolution and growth through democratic mechanisms. On the other hand, India is the world’s largest democracy with over half-a-century of representative institutions, coalition governance and the supremacy of the role of law. Hence the espousal of common characteristics within the systems of the two democracies has, over time, had a magnetic effect on them.

There has been little historical contact between the two civilisations, although the transcendental movement in the United States during the 1830s and the 1840s was influenced by the Upanishads. The increasing spirituality in the West, and in the United States in particular, has increased people-to-people contacts with India, considered as the abode of spirituality.

Economic Power-houses

The United States has woken up to the potential of the Indian economy in the twenty-first century. The attractions of a huge market for the dumping of its raw materials, finished goods and the availability of cheap labour due to the huge population, has made India the biggest target in the services sector for the United States. The availability of an alternative in terms of quality infrastructure, cheap labour and cost effectiveness has seen a large number of jobs being ‘outsourced’ from the United States to India. Although this has sparked socio-cultural tensions between and within the two economies, the benefits of outsourcing, especially for India, has far exceeded the side-effects. India has immensely benefited by gaining access to the superior infrastructure and technological know-how of the United States. There is more money flowing into the Indian economy with increasing employment being generated and higher purchasing power in the hands of the working class. All current analyses predict that India was likely to become one the five major economies in the first half of this century and to overtake Japan, Germany, Britain and France at some point in the next 25 to 50 years. The record thus far amply substantiates the claim that India will be one of Asia’s two major ascending powers. It is expected that the Indian economy would grow at a rate of seven to eight per cent for the next two decades.

Military Concerns

Defence has increasingly become the key sphere in Indo-US relations lately. The United States sees India “as a potential hedge against a rising China”, according to the defence and nuclear expert, Ashley J. Tellis. It is concerned about the growth of the Chinese military, its monetary policy, its vicious attacks on Japan and its increasing power projection capabilities. An unbridled China is not in the American interest and by bolstering India, the United States can arrest the “growth of Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean rimlands and Chinese penetration of Myanmar”, according to the recent Carnegie Report. Another reason is the need to preserve order in South Asia where India is seen as an island of democratic values and political stability surrounded by states who have a need to cope with state failure. The growing menace of terrorism, which has posed a common threat to both the countries, has forced them to consider closer cooperation.

The next steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) was a precarious breakthrough and a step towards active defence cooperation. But the recent visit of the Defence Minister, Pranab Mukherjee, to the United States has
resulted in the signing of a comprehensive “Defence Framework”. It includes, among other things, collaboration in multinational operations, missile defence, shared security interest to protect the free flow of commerce and also co-production of defence equipments prominently featuring the F-16 and F-18 aircraft. It is significant to note though that India is already one of the largest troop contributors to the UN peace-keeping operations and the Defence Minister, after returning to India and faced with strong protests, declared that it was not about to accept a missile defence shield. Yet the defence framework agreement is seen as a step towards setting out the parameters within which the two countries could potentially cooperate if it is in their interests.

**Nuclear Cooperation**

The recently concluded agreement on the nuclear front has seen both countries abandon positions which had been virtual articles of faith for their respective establishments. The United States has agreed to full civil nuclear energy cooperation, while India has, in return, agreed to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities and programme in a phased manner and place its civilian nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards. While both sides have shown considerable flexibility, India will now get access to nuclear goods; this would specially meet its need for natural uranium, which has been fast depleting in the Jaduguda mines, at a time when low enriched uranium (LEU), which was last supplied to it by Russia in 2001, is likely to run out in 2006. Already two (TAPS-1 and 2 and RAPS-1 and 2) out of the 15 operating nuclear plants are under IAEA safeguards. This agreement will also allow India the manoeuvring space to enter the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER), Generation IV and Radkowsky Thorium Reactor (RTR) research programmes. The ITER is an international programme to develop nuclear power systems of the future that exploit nuclear fusion while Generation IV nuclear technology is aimed at developing systems that will provide clean, safe proliferation and terrorism resistant and cost affective means of sustainable generation of nuclear power. The RTR is a concept that uses a once-through fuel cycle to convert Th-232 to U-233 in a thermal LWR and allows the bred U-233 to burn. However, Indian nuclear experts have expressed a fear that allowing international inspections of all civilian nuclear plants would seriously hamper ongoing research work on the fast breeder reactor (FBR) programme and compromise India’s long-term energy security. Doubts have also been raised over the cost effectiveness of segregating civilian and military facilities especially when India’s nuclear policy has been based on ‘deterrence’ and not ‘stockpiling’.

**Neutralising Pakistan**

India’s independence coincided with the advent of the Cold War. Jawaharlal Nehru’s non-aligned and pro-socialist policy—a response to then prevailing reality—adversely affected Indo-US relations as a consequence of the US reaction to such a policy. Strong Indian protests to American presence in Korea while being less vocal to the Soviet invasion of Hungary subsequently created fissures in these relations. India’s refusal to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) and the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in spite of repeated American efforts firmly established India, in the US Administration’s perception, as a USSR sympathiser. This perception also resulted in the United States enlisting Pakistan as an ally to marginalise India globally. Enlisting American assistance, especially military aid, has provided Pakistan plenty of manoeuvring space vis-a-vis India.

**Regionalising China**

Similarly another important country having an influence on Indo-US relations is China. In the present scenario, the Red Dragon has emerged as a key competitor to the United States. It has threatened to take over American companies by increasing its stakes in them and audaciously smuggled spies into the United States to steal missile technology. Thus it is imperative for the United States to deepen its ties with India in order to contain China regionally as it is for India, which has to establish a comprehensive strategic superiority vis-a-vis Pakistan.

**United Nations Security Council Seat**

The rise of India on the global stage is no longer a question but the answer. The United States has realised that if indeed it wants to stay as the pre- eminent player in Asia, it must stop treating India as part of the problem. It must shed old inhibitions, adopt new attitudes and forge ahead with India because it is in America’s interests to do so. Gazing at the crystal-ball of tomorrow’s geo-politics with concrete present-day realities in mind, the Bush Administration has signalled initial support for India’s aspirations. The United States would like to push widespread reforms within the United Nations and not just its expansion. In the just released Carnegie Report, an internal CIA assessment ranking countries on national power (a
weighted combination of GDP, defence spending, population and technology growth), India is assessed to climb to the fourth most "capable concentration of power" after the US, EU and China by 2015. It has also called India the most important "swing state" in the international system—a country that could tilt the balance between war and peace, between chaos and order.

To sum up, strengthening Indo-American relations has its own advantages and disadvantages for India. The relationship has to be carefully crafted through a national consensus in order to negate the cobweb of traditionally antagonistic national sentiments and ethos nurtured during the anti-colonial phase.

PRESIDENT’S RULE IN STATES

How to Tackle the Problem at the Centre

SUDHANSHU RANJAN

"...About a hundred years back democracy was a bad thing... In the next fifty years it became a good thing...in the last fifty years it became an ambiguous thing..." commented C. B. Macpherson in his book, The Real Meaning of Democracy a few decades ago. Democracy is a nebulous concept and getting more and more nebulous day by day. Even a general impression that it is a rule by majority is contested and taken to be a misnomer by many. The concept of democracy is still in the process of evolution. Recent developments in some States force us to define democracy afresh. In Bihar President’s Rule had to be imposed as no party or alliance commanded the support of the majority of MLAs and ultimately the Legislative Assembly was dissolved. It befuddles legal experts that what was dissolved was yet to be constituted! It has created history. General elections were held in Bihar in February-March last for the thirteenth Legislative Assembly. Now there will no record of thirteenth Legislative Assembly and 109 MLAs(?) elected for the first time have nothing to boast except the Election Commission’s certificates. They will not be even called ex-MLAs.

It is simply baffling that elections, which are held for the formation of a popular government, lead to Central Rule. It began from UP in 1996. Then UP was under the President’s Rule before the poll and even after the poll it remained under the President’s Rule. The reason was the same as cited in Bihar. Then the BJP, as the largest single party, had staked claim to form the government in UP while this time in Bihar, the RJD, as the single largest party, and the NDA, as the single largest alliance, staked claim but the Governor was not satisfied. However, in UP a popular government was formed after some time but in Bihar even this possibility has been scotched.

The question arises, what is majority? One does not require to get the majority of votes of one’s constituency in order to become an MLA or an MP. The candidate bagging the highest number of votes is elected, the number of votes not even reaching three digits (in some cases) in a constituency having several lakh voters notwithstanding. It happened in Assam in 1983 when elections were foisted on an unwilling people amidst a call of boycott by the AASU. Then candidates getting a few hundred votes, and in one case just 23 votes, were elected MLAs. This first-past-the-post system does not require the winner to get a minimum percentage of votes. According to Article 164(1) the Governor and under Article 75(1) the President appoints the Chief Minister and the Prime Minister respectively. This is the only provision where the Governor or the President is not bound by the advice of the Council of Ministers and uses his/her discretion. The Constitution nowhere says that the Governor or the President must invite only one who enjoys the support of the majority.

Again the question is how to use the discretion and what is the basis of the concept of majority in the House? Jharkhand Governor Syed Sibt e Razvi refused to accept the claim of the NDA, though five independent MLAs required to reach the magic figure of 41, were physically paraded before him. He said that democracy was not only a numbers game. Again after swearing-in Shibu Soren as the Chief Minister he commented that if the Chief Minister is to be decided by numbers alone what was the need of having the Governor? It could be ascertained in the house. It may be mentioned that the concept of majority comes from the Constitution’s Preamble which says: “We, the people of India, having solemnly resolved to constitute it into a Sovereign, Secular, Socialist, Democratic, Republic...” It is clear that India is a democratic republic and democracy is taken to be the rule of the majority.

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