

## **CHAPTER II**

# **STRATEGIC WORLDVIEW OF THE UNITED STATES: INDIA'S POSITION AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

The first chapter dealt with the theoretical presentation of understanding the concepts of superpower and regional power, what necessitates their interaction with each other and defining the various modes of interactions. The chapter also posits the United States and India within the ambit of superpower and regional power interactions in the post- cold war scenario. This chapter will try to understand the strategic worldview of the United States and to trace how India is positioned within it. The chapter begins with tracing the formation of a distinct foreign policy of a young United States acting within the British dominated international system to its emergence as the sole superpower. The objective of the chapter is to outline the changes or continuity in America's strategic viewpoint, essentially stressing on the post-cold war period. The period from its initial formative years to the cold war is dealt mainly based on major strategic developments or transformations. The post-cold war period is dealt in two parts, firstly, it discusses the various contending U.S foreign policy schools as they developed their own arguments regarding preservation of American power, secondly, it deals with the post- cold war administrations and how they have perceived and acted on American strategic worldview. In the second part of the chapter the study tried to outline India's position within larger American strategic imperatives to identify in what ways India has figured amidst America's quest of maintaining an international system conducive to a sole superpower.

The United States, ascension from a disparate collection of colonies and a vulnerable republic to the exalted position of a superpower surely constitutes one of the most improbable, compelling and important tales of modern history.

## **2.1 The Formation of Initial Foreign Policy Ideals**

The young American republic took shape within an international system dominated by Great Britain. Great Britain was the center of global empire and financial system in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The economic, military and political destiny of The United States was wrapped up in its relationship with Great Britain. However, the British to meet the new expenses raised the taxes on the colonies leading to resistance from America. Resistance to the new imposed taxes added two key elements to the development of American foreign policy; firstly, it created a sense of American national interest distinct from British Empire. Secondly, the Americans fought the new taxes with economic coercion, which became rooted in American diplomacy as a substitute of military force or traditional diplomacy (Mcmahon & Zeiler, 2012:3).

### **2.1.1 Charting an alternative foreign policy**

The second continental Congress witnessed a rift between the moderates who wanted reconciliation with Great Britain and the radicals who wanted independence. The moderates swept throughout 1775 and was confined to Great Britain .When the English king rejected the olive branch petition it started to chart an alternative foreign policy machinery. In November 1775 the Congress formed a secret committee to buy supplies and a secret committee of correspondence charged with communicating with America's friends in Great Britain, Ireland and France (Mcmahon & Zeiler, 2012:4). A dominant change in its stance was noticed in the overtures to France. The Congress pursued a policy of seeking materials from abroad without formally seeking diplomatic support. Trade treaties were signed with China, Sweden and Prussia (Mcmahon & Zeiler, 2012:7-9).

### **2.1.2 The strategic isolation from European politics and avoiding entangling alliances**

The latter half of 18<sup>th</sup> century saw The United States was caught between the severe Anglo French war which challenged most of its diplomatic considerations. Surrounded by an anarchic situation Washington issued his farewell address in 1796 warning against involvement in European politics and permanent alliances with other nations. "The great rule of conduct for us in regard to foreign nations is in extending

our commercial relation to have with them as little political connection as possible...It is our true policy to steer clear of permanent alliances with any portion of the foreign world; Taking care always to keep ourselves by suitable establishments on a respectable defensive posture, we may safely trust to temporary alliances for extraordinary...emergencies” (Avalon Project - Washington's Farewell Address 1796, 1796). The passive American participation was also tied up with an expansionist policy of Manifest Destiny.

The warning of avoiding entangling alliances went hand in hand with the attempts of extending the boundaries by series of purchases and annexations in the Jeffersonian era. The most remarkable was the Louisiana Purchase from the French. By July 11<sup>th</sup> Spain was ready to secede Florida; the final treaty of February 22, 1819 gave the Florida to the United States. The Monroe administration recognized Chile, Peru, Mexico and Columbia in 1822 partly from the fear that delay would put Latin America in to the European sphere of influence.

The Monroe Doctrine was framed amidst the Russian claim to more territory and the Holy Alliance’s threat to recover Spanish empire ((Mcmahon & Zeiler, 2012:15). It declared that the Spanish American Nations were irrevocably independent, the America’s were closed to further colonization, the U.S will not interfere in the existing colonies or in Europe and Europe should not interfere in the Americas. (Mcmahon & Zeiler, 2012:15). Monroe did not comply with the British overtures to issue a joint declaration and hence rather than issuing a unilateral proclamation he chose to declare his views in his address to Congress on December 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1823. Firstly Monroe said that the countries of Western Hemisphere “By the free independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be conceived as subjects of future colonization by any European powers...consider any attempt on their part to extend their system on any part of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety.”<sup>7</sup>

Monroe’s speech had no remarkable immediate impact, was little noted by the Great Powers of Europe, but eventually became a longstanding tenet of U.S. foreign policy. The three main concepts of the doctrine—separate spheres of influence for the

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<sup>7</sup> For the entire speech of President Monroe refer to <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-2-1823-seventh-annual-message-monroe-doctrine>

Americas and Europe, non- colonization, and non-intervention—were designed to signify a clear break between the New World and the autocratic realm of Europe. The desire to increase the United States’ influence and trading ties throughout the region and to their south. European mercantilism posed the greatest obstacle to economic expansion (Milestones: 1801–1829 - Office of the Historian).

The passive American participation was also tied up with an expansionist policy of Manifest Destiny. The limited approach of Monroe Doctrine walked hand in hand with the penchant for expansions in Manifest Destiny that led to further expansions without entangling into European politics and supported expansions closer to home. American diplomacy in this era was defined by (a) limited political connection to Europe, but as much trade as possible, (b) Non entanglement in European politics as they turned their attention towards the west away from the big powers of Europe.

### **2.1.3 Manifest Destiny and distancing from European politics and overseas expansion**

American foreign policy during the period of 1815 to 1860 was dominated by the surge of a sense of superiority reflected in the concept of Manifest Destiny merged with the diplomatic endeavors of acquiring territories especially nearer to home together with the growing thrust for expanding foreign trade specially to the East. Manifest Destiny was a belief in 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S that United States was destined to expand its domination, spread democracy across the North American continent<sup>8</sup>. It was the First World War that finally enmeshed U.S in European affairs and most importantly in global politics.

U.S president Woodrow Wilson had demanded at the war’s beginning that America remain neutral in thought and action. Meanwhile Americans could profit by selling food and war supplies. It was all economic considerations until the German submarines repeatedly attacked American vessels and ships. On April 1917 U.S declared war on central powers.

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<sup>8</sup> For the idea of manifest destiny and its utilization to justify the territorial expansion of U.S in 19<sup>th</sup> Century refer to <https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/manifest-destiny>

## **2.2 The First World War: The idea to shape the world**

“World War I made the United States the world’s greatest financial power; crushed Germany economically reduced both Britain and France to a status where neither could mount an effective opposition to American designs anywhere in the world. In the aftermath of the war Britain conceded to the United States something it had withheld from all its rivals in the two centuries of warfare: Britain accepted the United States as the co-monarch of the seas.” (Mead, 2005:9)

It was Woodrow Wilson’s vision of democracy for new nations that marked the first proclamation of an idea to shape the world order by The United States. It was a different world in the post war period which was racked by revolution specially a strong Communist commitment to spread its wings across Europe and offering an alluring alternative to the long suffering colonial people of Asia and Africa. It was the combination of a revolutionary communism that made the U.S to chart out a vision concerning the international order indicating a shift from its non-entanglement mentality. Wilson demanded the new nations be governed by American style democracy. He was determined, as he said, ‘to make the world safe for democracy’. Wilson vowed to end, ‘once and forever’, the centuries-long ‘old order’ of international affairs which had tried to maintain peace by what ‘we used to call the “balance of power”—a thing in which the balance was determined by the sword’ (Combs, 2012: 2).

### **2.2.1 The virtual isolation**

Americans were disillusioned with the results of the First World War and concluded that participating in international politics was a mistake. They reverted back to their historical traditions of non-interference and non-entanglement in the 1920’s and 1930’s. During this period the American policy was clear, steer out of global political enmeshment and concentrate on economic reconstruction of the devastated countries to limit the spread of Communism to these areas and to gain financially by finding markets for its booming industrial, banking and farm complexes. Mead asserts, “The United States in the 1920’s and 1930’s lay under the spell of a historical myth—call it the myth of virtuous isolation. The United States prospered when we honoured it; when we strayed from its precepts, and worshipped false idols, we suffered” (Mead,

2005:59). Such was the disdain and apathy towards global engagements that the idea of getting enmeshed into another war seemed almost impossible but soon the changes in the global scenario witnessed the entry of The United States in the Second World War.

U.S banks rebuild the German economy and Japan in Asia. However, the economic depression that hit U.S in 1929 fundamentally challenged their outlook. When that currency began to weaken after 1929, so did German and Japanese ties to the United States. U.S could do little as Japan invaded Manchuria and China and as Germany slid down to Nazism. (Cox & Stokes: 52). In 1928 U.S suffered the steepest depression and the political scenario in Europe became tensed. Hitler's invasion of Poland marked the beginning of the Second World War. The American response was that of caution and restraint. "The Monroe Doctrine understood to oppose The United States involvement in Europe, and Washington's Farewell Address, understood to oppose participation in partnership of any kind were the potent sources of opposition to The United States entry into World War II..." (Mead 2005:59).

U.S extended economic assistance to Britain and Soviet Union while avoiding direct participation in the war. It was the sudden Japanese attack on Pearl harbour that finally led the Roosevelt administration to declare war in 1941. The late entry ensured fewer casualties and less economic damage so at the end of the war U.S was in the most beneficial position with its booming industrial production standing over the almost ruined stature of the British, Russian, Japanese and Western European industries. "The United States entered the war later than any other great power, lost less blood in the fighting and realized greater gains from the settlement than any other combatant... The United States secured an unchallenged position of leadership in a bloc of countries that includes the richest, most dynamic and the most intellectually advanced societies in the world" (Mead, 2005:10). Till the end of Second World War U.S foreign policy can be seen having a greater stress on trade relations and economic expansion with a sense of entitlement based on manifest destiny.

## **2.3 Constructing an international system: The vision of a new world with powerful United States**

Bolstered by the realization of their advantageous position where U.S had the paramount strength, capital and resources to have a decisive say and not to be bogged down by the larger European powers, U.S readily moved forward to form an international organization for maintenance of peace and stability. In the aftermath of the Second World War U.S was convinced that the newly formed United Nations will be optimally controlled by the Americans (Combs, 2012).

The American vision of the new world was one that was open, integrated with potential for free trade. By 1944 U.S built three pillars of United Nations, Bretton Woods's institutions and GATT to escalate the process of rebuilding the Post war world and to ensure financial co-operation. Such U.S led financial system was first opposed by Britain over the question of removal of trade barriers and thereafter by the Soviets who refused to allow any international organization led by the United States to examine Soviet records or to shape Russian economy.

This bone of contention severely impacted the failure of the Americans and the Russians to agree on the construction of the post war world.

### **2.3.1 The conflict of ideas: Identification of a new threat**

A new conflict emerged between the United States and the Soviet Union but this time it was over *the idea* of how the new world would be. Whether it will be open to trade, investment, cultural influences as per the wishes of The United States or whether the strategically war hit areas to be closed and controlled by the victorious Soviets.

End of the second world war, The United States emerged with less casualty, a stable economy and an Europe without powerful states, thus, the new world was to be constructed to its advantage. However, the Soviet interests in Eastern and Central Europe coerced the United States in addressing a geopolitical and military threat to its security as well as a communist ideological threat ushered similar concern. The American foreign policy was to be directed in a way to secure a new world with trading benefits in absence of the fear of entangling in affairs of big European powers instead it became engrossed with finding befitting responses to the Soviet actions in

Eastern and Central Europe. The gradual elimination of non-communist political forces and the coercive economic integration of East-central Europe into the Soviet economic system between 1945 and 1948 were crucial to shift in US perspectives. The militarized character of such actions coupled with the strong adherence to communist ideology and the state controlled closed economy convinced the American leaders that Moscow could no longer be seen as a partner or ally, but rather a competitor and foe committed to establishing a very different if not antagonistic set of post-war arrangements (Saul, 1998:66).

## **2.4 The Cold War: Emergence of a potential rival and the policy of resistance and interference**

Europe's economy was steadily deteriorating which required substantial aid. Better organized Communist parties in Italy and France appeared to be gaining strength at the expense of the fragile democratic forces. (Mead, 2005:60). It was evident that the circumstances demanded a different kind of response from the United States one that involves breaking off the cocooned shelter permanently and putting forward an interventionist attitude. The American foreign policy establishments created the "Myth of the Cold War" (Mead, 2005:61). The new myth revolved around building an image of 'them' as a unified global force engaged in determined aggressive crusade to impose communist ideology in every corner of the world. George Kennan's 'Long Telegram' and in the condensed version appeared in the foreign affairs under article X was useful in weaving an atmosphere of looming uncanny malevolence that helped in manipulating and mobilizing the public opinion and the Congress (Kenan, 1947).

The reasons behind such exaggeration of Soviet threat and manipulation mainly aroused due to the concerns of keeping Western Europe beyond Stalin's overtures as it was essential to America's trade and it being the repository of shared values of Western civilization, secondly, the strategic<sup>9</sup> areas of Middle East with its oil reserves could not be allowed to fall into unfriendly hands.

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<sup>9</sup> American resistance to Soviet Supremacy see Jones 'the fifteen weeks':239-54 Jackson, S. (1979). Prologue to the Marshall Plan: The Origins of the American Commitment for a European Recovery Program. *The Journal of American History*, 65(4), 1043-1068. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1894559>



### **2.4.1 The Policy of Containment: Transformation of American foreign policy**

It was essential to make American power available to arrest the extension of Soviet influence in important areas. The policy of 'Containment' that emerged embodied some striking reversals of traditional policies. Isolationism was exchanged for extensive involvement. Peacetime alliances were negotiated with almost promiscuous zeal in the 1950s.

Containment was not only defensive in character but also motivated by traditional principles self-government. Walter Russell Mead argues that economic dimension was the ultimate decisive factor that gave Americans a boost in the beginning and an increasingly affluent victory at the end. (Mead, 2005:66). However, economics took a back step in the long middle period where the rivalry was dominated by political and military aspects as security threat became the primary concern. Absence of economic competitors further diluted the stress on economic influence in foreign policy and cemented the belief in a security first policy at a time of profound political crisis under the shadow of thermonuclear war.

The policy of Containment acquired distinctively military overtones with the negotiation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization in 1949 marked an abandonment of the traditional policy of no entangling alliances. With the cold war dissipating in Asia, the U.S policy of containment was 'globalized' transcending its focus from Europe to Asia, West Asia, Southeast Asia and others.

The strains developed into a massive economic recession one that had major implications over the contours of U.S foreign policy in the 1970's and beyond.

### **2.4.2 Back to its roots: The shift from military postures to finding moral grounds**

The inglorious end to Vietnam War, the demise of the Bretton Woods system, the growing disinterest among the European countries towards U.S – Soviet rivalry and their eagerness in constructing their own trade agreements like the Helsinki Agreements forced the American foreign policy makers to shift their priority towards

the more traditional foreign policy ideals. Both Carter and Reagan administrations though divergent in their ways came to the common conclusion that the cold war struggle with Soviet Union required a moral dimension. (Mead, 2005:75). A strong human rights policy was made a crucial element of foreign policy. U.S withdrew its patronage from dictatorial regimes in Chile and Philippines that were earlier encouraged as key allies during the Nixon administration.

### **2.4.3 The economic decline**

Constructing a moral ground was entwined with economic measures such as the supply side policies to step up the economy on strong foot as the Soviet economy was slowly depreciating and U.S economy was strained. Gorbachev's political and economic reforms opened new horizons of détente with U.S. while millions were debating about how to end the decades of the mutually debilitating confrontation, economic collapse did it abruptly.

## **2.5 The End of Cold War: The Emergence of United States as the sole superpower and new foreign policy**

The 1990's following the disintegration of Soviet Union was an unknown unfathomable period. The well acquainted world of bipolar politics and rivalry known for half a decade suddenly disappeared. The question was if cold war bipolar politics has ended then what would succeed it? While Fukuyama predicted the end of ideological conflicts as the end of an historical era triumphed by the western political and economic liberalism (Fukuyama, 1989) correspondingly the triumphant was acclaimed by many in terms of the unprecedented resource and power The United States possessed in comparison to the rest to 'yield an international structure unique to modern history: 'Unipolarity' (Krauthammer, 1990). "The most striking feature of the post-Cold War world is its unipolarity...a single pole of world power that consists of the United States at the apex of the industrial West...American preeminence is based on the fact that it is the only country with the military, diplomatic, political and economic assets to be a decisive player (Krauthammer,1990). Amidst such claims The United States was in dilemma concerning framing of a new American role in absence of its pivotal concern of a Soviet threat. How to secure and sustain American eminence while maintaining its political economic engagements in world affairs to

promote a stable international order, and one that was favourable to the pursuit of U.S interests (Ruggie,1997:90).

In a Times Mirror survey taken in June 1995, the view that the United States should "mind its own business internationally and let other countries get along the best they can on their own" was rejected by just 51 percent of the public while 41 percent agreed the highest level of agreement since the survey's inception (Ruggie, 1997:91). The eminence of America's unipolar moment was also debated by scholars like Samuel P. Huntington, Christopher Layne, Kenneth Waltz who saw the new system moving towards multiple centers of power (Layne, 1993:5-51; Waltz, 2000:44-79; Huntington, 1999). The aim was to search for possible options of American foreign policy without a Soviet threat. Dealing with a generation of policy tradition focused on offering a successful alternative to Communism and bereft of the rival that kept U.S focused and outwardly the years following 1990's was mostly spend in searching for a purpose or a vision beyond cold war strategies.

This moment presented a challenge not only to the new administration but also to the various strategic schools of U.S Foreign Policy to deliver discreet and coherent arguments to further U.S interests in the international system. Preserving and advancing U.S predominance remains the primary objective of all the contending grand strategies they differ in their means and approaches. The study considers five contending strategies to outline the debates over of what The United States should seek and how to achieve those interests.

## **2.6 Five Contending U.S Grand Strategies**

### **2.6.1 Primacy**

The grand strategy of primacy believes that U.S should undertake all efforts to retain its position as the undisputed preeminent power in the international system and to promote its values among other peoples and to shape the international environment so as to reflect its values (Huntington, 1999:68-70). They argue that America's grand strategy should be one of preventing any future great powers from challenging the power of the United States. The objective for primacy, therefore, is not merely to preserve peace among the great powers, but to preserve U.S. supremacy by politically,

economically, and militarily outdistancing any global challenger (Posen & Ross, 1996:30). To prevent the rise of a competitor at the global or regional level they stress that U.S needs to promote universality of an international order based on international law, democratic traditions, free market economies which will not only solidify its global interests but also prevent the emergence of niche regional orders with regional hegemony. The regional dimension of the strategy is consistent with the global dimension: the aspirations of regional as well as global hegemony are to be thwarted. Posen clearly writes that the United States would also endeavor to discourage India's hegemonic ambitions in South Asia (Posen, 1997:32). Thus, to deter the rise of a rival the primacists advocate a policy of "new containment" that identifies a threat that provides the rationale for remaining heavily involved in the concerned areas and for maintaining the political, economic and especially military capabilities needed to pursue an intense global strategic competition. The containment can be potential or latent given the degree of threat arising (Brzezinski, 1994; Kurth, 1996). Though they talk about building of an international system conducive to American interests they however do not consider international organizations as platforms through which U.S could influence others.

### **2.6.2 Neo-isolationism**

To preserve the predominance of The United States in the Post-Cold war scenario there emerged a reconstructed view of an old grand strategy of isolationism. Neo isolationists claimed a return to America's interwar policy of 'strategic independence' or 'hemispheric defense'. The advocates of this neo-isolationist strategy seldom refer to themselves as isolationists, and vociferously deny isolationist tendencies. Earl Ravenal (1991) prefers the term 'disengagement', Doug Bandow (1994) prefers 'benign detachment'. For them the primary threat to American predominance in the post-cold war period is its entanglements in international system. The neo isolationist claim that there is no threat of a potential challenger to U.S primacy but it is the entanglements of U.S worldwide that will be a major threat in maintaining its predominance, "As we ascend the staircase of 21<sup>st</sup> century, America is uniquely situated to lead the world...But America can only lead the world into the twenty-first century if she is not saddled down by all the baggage piled up in the twentieth century" (Buchanan, 1990:81). U.S should refrain from meddling in disputes if they

do not threaten U.S core interests neither it is America's duty to make things right (Ravenal, 1991:7-8). They attack the internationalists for their view of interdependence and binding U.S in entangling web of problems abroad because they serve no great political purpose.

### **2.6.3 Selective Engagement**

Selective engagement steers a middle course between the minimal realism of neo isolationism or the maximal realism of primacy. "Selective engagement seeks both realist and liberal goals and can therefore be termed a "realpolitik plus" strategy (Art, 1998:80).

Selective engagement believes in endeavours to engage with selected powers that have substantial military, economic and political potential—the great powers; to prevent occurrence of conflicts among them as it will adversely affect the United States. Advocates of selective engagement stresses that U.S resources are scarce; it is insufficient to preserve its preeminent position or to ensure global security (Clarke, 1996: 37-51). For selective engagers one of the vital goals of The United States should be maintaining peace amongst the Eurasian great powers but the primary stress is the prevention of proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. "For selective engagers, the threat to worry about today is rogue states or fanatical terrorists (or both) armed with NBC weapons, not conventional attacks from strong states or nuclear threats from "normal" states" (Art, 1998:84). Selective engagement unlike neo isolationists stress on multilateral cooperation and alliance building as the suitable means to achieve its goals. For the advocates of selective engagement, to protect America's vital interests in maintain great power peace traditional Alliances are the appropriate vehicle. Selective engagement is a forward-defense strategy. It therefore prescribes retention of America's core alliances. America's core alliances and forward deployed troops helps in maintaining peace, dampen security competition, retard nuclear proliferation, serve as institutional forums where important political-military issues can be managed by maintaining close political-military links with other great powers. While the advocates of primacy wants to contain rise of any rival power, selective engagement is more adaptive to the emergence of new powers given U.S will engage with them to prevent occurrence of new conflicts.

## **2.6.4 Liberal Internationalism**

Like primacists, liberal internationalists favour the promotion of an ‘Americanized’ world order, characterized by the spread of democratic governments and open markets. Unlike primacists, however, liberal internationalists believe that a strong set of multilateral institutions - rather than America's military predominance - is really the key to creating and sustaining a friendlier and democratic world order. If U.S needs to maintain its preeminence it should cooperate and amalgamate multilaterally in order to serve its interest and reduce security threats (Dueck, 2004:516). Liberal international works through two broad strategies of co-operative security and promotion of democracy.

Cooperative security can be defined as a strategic principle that seeks to accomplish its purposes through institutional consent rather than through threats of material or physical coercion (Nolan & Rose, 1999:4-5). International institutions, particularly the UN, are to play a critical role in coordinating the deterrence and defeat of aggression. Institutions respond to eminent threat and deter all who would break the peace (Posen & Ross, 1997:22-23). Liberal internationalists favour the promotion of democracy and human rights, worldwide, and they suggest that the US do so with greater consistency. They presume that democracies will find it easier to work together in co-operative security regimes and U.S should apply pressure to allies as well as adversaries, great powers as well as small ones to adopt democratic ideals. Their trust on the idea of ‘democratic peace’ obviates their fear of a great power security competition (Doyle, 1983).

## **2.6.5 Offshore Balancing**

The advocates of offshore balancing labeled the strategy of liberal internationalism as a revisionist grand strategy that drains U.S resources to promote democracy and human rights everywhere and denigrate its core interests. Offshore balancing has been suggested as a suitable grand strategy for The United States in the 21<sup>st</sup> century by proponents like John J. Mearsheimer, Stephen M. Walt. According to them, Washington should forgo ambitious efforts to remake other societies and encourage other countries to take the lead in checking rising powers and maintaining the regional balance of power, intervening itself only when necessary (Mearsheimer &

Walt, 2016:71).

The principal aim of offshore balancing is preserving U.S dominance over Western Hemisphere and countering potential hegemon in the three strategically important regions of the globe: Europe, Northeast Asia and Persian Gulf. The second objective is to restrain the use of U.S military force, diplomatic and economic means to ensure restoration of peace around the world. Promoting peace is desirable but it is not the prime goal (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016:72). Offshore balancing would help U.S to maintain its relative power position in the international system by leaving the security matters of the regional powers in their own hands which will reduce the counterbalancing efforts and will help U.S to concentrate on the core issues and the areas of vital interests (Mearshimer & Walt, 2016:72-75). The United States would calibrate its military force according to the power distribution in the three vital regions. They believe that Europe and Gulf should be left to be managed by regional powers but its Asia where Washington cannot just rely on local powers with a rising China aspiring for hegemony. The regional powers are located far from each other making it harder to form an effective balancing coalition. Thus, The United States should maintain constant presence and contribute to the efforts of the regional powers that sought to uphold the balance of power in Asia.

Following the end of cold war structural realists offered some predictions regarding systematic changes. Scholars like Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer, in particular, predicted that the international system would evolve in a multipolar direction, and that previously quiescent powers such as Germany and Japan would begin to assert themselves on political and strategic, as well as economic matters.(Waltz,2000:42-77; Mearsheimer,1990:5-56).

The implicit policy prescription was that the United States accepts the inevitable trend towards multipolarity, and scale back considerably on its global military presence. This initial ideas underwent restructuring soon enough as Mearsheimer himself argued that the fiercely competitive nature of the international system forces states to adopt aggressive strategies, and to maximize their relative power, whenever possible (Mearsheimer, 2001: 31-39).

## **2.7 Defining the Post-Cold War U.S Foreign Policy**

The H.W Bush and Clinton administrations were mostly embroiled in deciding on a clear, publicly defensible strategy for U.S foreign policy. Ronald Steel discerned ‘a chasm between a foreign policy establishment mesmerized by notions of American leadership and “global responsibilities” (Steel, 1995:85). The debate over the pursuits of foreign policy dominated the post- cold war administrations to such levels that during the first years of Clinton presidency the debate was widely known as ‘Kennan Sweepstakes’ a conscious effort to find a post-Soviet statement of purpose to rival George Kennan’s early Cold War concept of ‘containment’ of communism (Brinkley1997; Dumbrell 2009: 41–5).

The end of ideological hostility signaled spread of western values of economic and political freedom conjoined by the advances of liberal democracy in various regions of the world helped in developing a new notion of “Democratic peace” an idea derived from Enlightenment philosopher Immanuel Kant which asserted that democracies are more peaceful in their foreign relations with other democracies was profoundly to influence the foreign policy thinking of the Clinton administration (Russett 1993; Doyle 1995). “Just as neighbors who raise each other’s barns are less likely to become arsonists, people who raise each other’s’ living standards through commerce are less likely to become combatants.(Bill Clinton, American University speech, February 1993). The overtly military tone of muscle power of the cold war gave way to the idea of ‘soft power’, involving the ability to co-opt rather than coerce, to set the assumptions, even the organizational framework, for international behaviour. The United States seemed, above all nations, to combine formidable amounts of economic, military, and ‘soft’ power (Nye, 2004).

Bush senior’s main contribution was to sketch an outline of the new world order following the invasion of Kuwait underlined a general commitment to democratic idealism but also a new form of internationalism which was closely attuned to the keen awareness of limits of American power.

### **2.7.1 Clinton Administration: Engagement & Enlargement**

William J. Clinton was perhaps the President who got the time and opportunity to



define the Post Cold War American foreign policy. He did articulate his vision but despondently it was not very different from his predecessor, President H.W Bush. In 1993, National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake delivered a few speeches outlining Clinton's agenda for the post-Cold War world, declaring that the successor to a doctrine of containment must be a strategy of enlargement- enlargement of the world's free community of market democracies. Two aspects can be highlighted as the cornerstone of this strategy, (a) the stress on free market economy, (b) developing connections with democratic allies.

Expanding the community of free market democracies emerged as the central tenet of Clinton administration (Jones, 2016).The administration led intense efforts to lower trade and investment barriers--completing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico, concluding the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), supporting the creation of the World Trade Organization and also outlined the role of big emerging markets like India, Mexico and China.

***The Strategy of Selective Engagement: Free Market, Prevention of Proliferation of nuclear weapons and democratic engagement***

The stress on free market economy was carefully merged with the strategy of selective engagement whereby it sought to engage with major powers specially democratic ones to prevent conflicts that may unnecessarily draw the U.S and to ensure U.S interest in maintaining great power peace. The White House release underlines that, “ President Clinton understood from the beginning of the Presidency that the most pervasive force in our world is globalization... the way for America to exercise its influence today is to build with our democratic partners an international system of strong alliances” (Clinton, White House, 1999).

The administration’s major priority was prevention of proliferation of nuclear weapons. Robert J Art while stating the vital interest puts the utmost priority on prevention of proliferation of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. Proliferation in some countries matters more than others, “For selective engagers, the threat to worry about today is rogue states or fanatical terrorists (or both) armed with NBC weapons, not conventional attacks from strong states or nuclear threats from

"normal" states" (Art, 1998:84). The administration led efforts to reduce the threat and spread of nuclear weapons. It successfully persuaded Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan to give up nuclear arsenals they inherited from former Soviet Union. It ratified the Chemical Weapons Convention. Undertook the initiative to conclude the CTBT and was one of the first countries to sign the historic agreement banning all nuclear explosions. In 1995 U.S played a critical role in securing the unconditional and indefinite extension of NPT. The administration made an able diplomatic effort to freeze North Korea's plutonium production under the 1994 U.S DPRK Agreed Framework (Clinton White House Archives, 1994).

Such commitment ran into troubled waters with Clinton conceding to the Republican pressure over the National Missile Defense treaty. He failed to dissuade India and Pakistan from testing nuclear weapons in 1998 pointing to the limited leverage of his engagement strategy at the regional level. He failed to convince the Senate to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in October 1999. This step undermined the long-standing U.S. effort to slow nuclear proliferation, reinforced foreign concerns about American unilateralism, and made it easier for China, India, and other nascent nuclear powers to develop weapons as sophisticated as America's.

### ***Preservation of unilateralist power through multilateral means***

A closer look into Clinton's foreign policy reveals that the plethora of strategies or policies that the administration supported, the prime strategic consideration has always been the preservation of the unilateralist power and maintenance of U.S pre-eminence. The policies soon followed engagement with great powers and democratic allies to prevent any sort of conflict, to proclaim its strong commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and endorsement of binding agreements, promoting free market economy and free trade agreements and working multilaterally. Stephen M. Walt asserts, Clinton may cloak U.S policy in the rhetoric of 'world order' and general global interests, but its defining essence remains the unilateralist exercise of sovereign power" (Walt, 2000).

President Clinton's commitments towards nuclear nonproliferation became questionable as the administration conceded to the NMD and refused to sign the landmines ban treaty as those were considered important to retain the preponderance

of U.S power. The administration's asserted multilateralism has been followed when relying on international institutions suited U.S purposes and ignoring them when they did not. It chose to outline a new world order based on free market, democratic peace, bereft of the threat of nuclear weapons, working through multilateral institutions making others believe that these are the common beneficial goals of the Post cold war world while selectively fine tuning every aspect to suit U.S purposes. It wanted to proclaim primacy and utilize the unilateral power but with caution and constraint trying to build global acceptability around the U.S led world order. As Walt writes, 'Clinton's strategy is hegemony on the cheap' (Walt, 2000).

Mastanduno (1997) talks about balance of threat theory as the most plausible explanation of U.S security policy which is quite in similar tones to the Clinton administration's policy. Explaining the balance of threat theory he writes it is an effort to preserve America's position at the top of the international hierarchy by engaging and reassuring major powers as they have the capability of undermining America's preponderance and strategic considerations. Clinton's policies also have a major power bias but one could also notice that the administration has often engaged or even intervened in situations of threat of conflict or conflicts at the local or regional level, what made them invest America's time and resources to deter conflicts in areas of little potential to directly threaten U.S pre-eminence? The White House Report states that "local conflicts can have global consequences. The purpose of Peacemaking, whether by diplomacy or force, must be to resolve conflicts before they escalate and harm our vital Interests." It further states that America's dominant power is more likely to be accepted if it is harnessed to the cause of peace (Clinton White House Archives, 1993).

Christopher Layne and Benjamin Schwarz in their article "American Hegemony – without an Enemy" while debating the reasons behind U.S intervention in the Balkans, a place not having intrinsic strategic value to U.S, points out that such an intervention can only make sense in terms of upholding a set of principles that have come to be associated with world order and hence of vital interests. They stress that President Clinton resurrected the domino theory and feared that unstaunched instability in the former Yugoslavia will spread to other countries and thereby somehow endanger U.S. thus, America's interests require the United States to lead an

effort to build a world order shaped by U.S values (Layne & Schwarz, 1993:7). A trend they argue is not only noticeable for the Balkans but Washington regards any change in the international status quo (even at the local and less strategically viable regions) as a challenge to its world order aspiration.(Layne & Schwarz, 1993). Walt (2000) has rightly remarked that in the post -cold war scenario America's insecurity is the self-inflicted consequence of a foreign policy that equates national interests with the maintenance of world order.

### **2.7.2 The George W. Bush Administration (2001-2009)**

If the Clinton administration practiced subtlety while realizing America's unilateralist power, the Bush administration proclaimed to pursue distinct American internationalism.

#### ***American Internationalism: Primacy, power projection and global leadership***

“American foreign policy in the republican era should refocus the United States on national interest and outlining the pursuit of key priorities” (Rice, 2000:46). The administration focused on a foreign policy quite in tune with the assumptions of classical realism primarily based on state to state relations with the cognition that interests can be pursued by determining ones power in relation to other nations. While stressing on narrowed definition of American interest it sought to refurbish its alliance structure around the world as a tangible manifestation of managing great power relations. It wanted to give priority to Europe and Asia as regions containing long term allies and potential rivals. The Bush administration vociferously advocated the benefits of utilizing military hard power to protect, defend and nurture its interests and to ensure peace globally. “America's military force must be secure because U.S is the only guarantor of global peace and security” (Rice, 2000).

The administration wanted to restrict America's involvement to only specific strategic cases. Firstly, it aimed to narrow American involvement and actions to strategically important ones. It aimed at steering away from any involvement in changing or reforming internal political fabric of other countries. This stands in great contrast to the vehement policy of democracy promotion of the same administration later. Secondly, it opposed engagement of American military in humanitarian interventions

without a strategic rationale. Thirdly, it wanted to limit its involvement in international institutions and multilateral agreements and if needed to oppose them. “Multilateral commitments, symbolic agreements should be secondary to American interest” (Rice, 2000). Though the Bush administration criticized Clinton’s foreign policy for unnecessarily entangling America into international conflicts and agreements yet on many aspects it reflected very similar policy goals like it also stressed on prioritizing great power relations, boosting economic growth through free markets.

### ***Was the America centric unilateral viewpoint of Bush Presidency unparalleled or unique?***

The Bush administration undoubtedly advocated for a unilateralist stance in foreign policy but that is not something novel or unique to The United States foreign policy. American foreign policy have a long tradition of embarking on exceptionalism of American power and there is a firm belief that by acting unilaterally and by avoiding entangling alliances U.S can prudently pursue its own interest (Lefflar,2004:23). It marks a break from the internationalist and multilateralist approach of U.S foreign policy since the end of cold war but even within such policies the administrations never repudiated the right to act alone. It is difficult to predict which way the foreign policy trends would have swayed in the absence of September 9/11 terrorist attacks on America.

### ***Confronting a unprecedented crisis: 9/11 and American foreign policy***

The events of 9/11 present a rare opportunity to analyze how an unprecedented crisis can change or modify strategic calculations and foreign policy of a state. It is one of those rare spectacular moments that have the capacity to bring about immediate rethinking in terms of definition of national interest, threat perception and policy formulation at the administrative and public level. The successive years following end of cold war slowly build up a generalized notion that the United States is almost immune to direct threats to its homeland based on its preeminent power and position in the international system. The massive attack on U.S heartland by non-state actors not only came as a shock but it exposed the vulnerabilities of a predominant power, its failure in detection of threat, falsified the notion of no direct threat and urged for

immediate recalibration of its security perception and policies. What was the reaction of a superpower which is entitled as the epitome of power, position or prestige when attacked profoundly at its very core?

Firstly, the promise and proclamation of retaliation. The foremost reaction should be one that could tide over the domestic public unrest and to find means to preserve its domestic image as the security provider to its own people. Nothing crystallizes public support as the fear of an uniform threat to national security and the Bush administration was quick to establish terrorism as a vicious potent threat to the American nation one comparable to the threat of communism but more critical as terrorism is a face-less enemy whose aim is to violently attack civilian lives borne out of hatred towards the great ideals of American society.

Secondly, to salvage the shockwaves that ran across the international arena regarding U.S susceptibility to threats and its vulnerabilities despite being the most powerful state. To balance the dwindling credibility and to maintain its global position it is expected that a superpower will try to convince others the element of threat that it is confronting is a global threat, one that will require conjoined efforts and shared responsibilities to be contained. The idea is to be able equate its own interest as a global one, to easily gather support and also reposition itself as the indispensable nation committed to lead a fight for common wellbeing.

***Transformation or mere modifications: The idea of a global threat, renewed idealism and cooperative multilateralism***

The events of 9/11 had a profound and pronounced effect, whether measured by the changed attitudes among the American public toward foreign policy, the changed agenda within Congress and new levels of support for the president on foreign policy issues, or the changed nature of the presidency itself. Major shifts and changes in the administration's policies and its content were natural. While the 9/11 attacks confirmed some of the administrations earlier assumptions about importance of hard power and enhanced military preparedness. (McCormick, 2009:245). The changes in the threat perception propelled the administration to formulate a new security strategy based on the defensive stance. Most striking was the urge to induce a form of idealism along with administration's reliance on utilization of hard power and military force.

The idea was to portray that the administration was motivated by a moral imperative in its action and seeks to promote common values beneficial to all. The Bush administration was keen on projecting international terrorism as the single most global security threat and to promote a worldwide imperative against terrorism. A detailed rationale of the administration's policies was depicted in the 'The National Security Strategy Statement of the United States of America'. To pursue its goal of promoting freedom the administration stressed on the following; on building a coalition of nations and alliances around the world to defeat terrorism; to cooperate with other countries to deny, contain and curtail the spread of weapons of mass destruction and lethal technologies; addressing (with the goal of resolving) regional conflicts to reduce their impact on global stability; to encourage the advancement of democracy and economic openness. Undoubtedly there were changes in the approaches of the administration from its initial policy plans and can be prominently traced to, its shift from a narrow or particularistic foreign policy approach to a more universal one. However stark these shifts seemed a closer evaluation will reveal that rather than a major shift these should better be termed as modifications.

Walter Russell Mead labels the Bush administration's adherents of these views as 'Revival Wilsonians' (Mead, 2005:167). That is, they supported the spread of democracy and the goodness of American intentions and actions, albeit without the embrace of international law and institutions, as Wilson initially proposed. Hence, a revamped Wilsonianism is the result, driven fundamentally by domestic American values and implemented primarily by American power and American unilateralism.

Leffler (2004:23) argues that there is nothing unprecedented about the pre-emptive strikes as they have a part of American foreign policy since cold war where it was largely practiced in Central America to Southeast Asia with the similar rhetorical justification of freedom. However, Ikenberry views the notion of pre-emptive strikes and use of force as a neo-imperial vision in which the United States arrogates to itself the global role of setting standards, determining threats, using force, and meting out justice.... It is a vision in which sovereignty becomes more absolute for America even as it becomes more conditional for countries that challenge Washington's standards of internal and external behavior (Ikenberry, 2009:44)

### ***The façade of multilateralism***

The administrations' ability to project terrorism as a global threat and its acknowledgement of the need of other states to fight it coupled with the initial turn to international institution and its recognition of multiple actors in international arena struck a responsive chord. But soon the unilateralist stance overshadowed such cooperation and led to an immense backlash to American led and military focused interventionism. President Bush's identification of the 'axis of evil' and the resultant actions against them coupled with the unilateralist approach to Iraq and the intent of the administration to get involved in domestic affairs of other states in lieu of handling regional conflicts into escalating raised alarms worldwide. The administration sought to deflect some of these criticisms by undertaking initiatives for appeasement like the 'roadmap for peace' between the Israelis and Palestinians, trying to work with the UN to introduce UNSC Resolution 1483 directed towards lifting of sanctions against Iraq. (McCormick, 2009: 250). However, such overtures did not translate into pivotal policy shifts and the administration moved along with its unilateralist assertiveness and prioritizing the fight against terrorism over all other pressing concerns. It equated America's priority as the priority of the rest of the world and pressed the allies to confirm to this without much consideration about their willingness or opinion. The result was a dwindling international reputation and flaring of anti-Americanism across the globe. Such unilateralist stance aggravated distrust, fear and limited the desire of other states to cooperate with The United States (Survey Report, PEW Research Centre, 2004).

Joseph Nye argues that the strategy of the neoconservatives is one dimensional and the willingness of other countries to cooperate in dealing with transnational issues such as terrorism depends in part on their own self-interest, but also on the attractiveness of American positions. Decreasing American attractiveness affects the extent of cooperation and concessions other are willing to make. Loss of legitimacy reduces U.S leverage in international affairs. (Nye, 2004:67- 68)

### ***The Bush administration: Second term***

Within a year into the Iraq war and amidst the soaring criticism at home and abroad Bush faced the elections for second term. Questions on security and deterrence ruled



the second elections and Bush managed to win primarily based on his promise to fight terrorism.

Maintaining the prime objective of fighting terrorism the second Bush administration outlined a new modified approach in his initial State of the Union address. President Bush linked the welfare of America to promotion of freedom and liberty abroad, "The survival of liberty in our land, increasingly depends on the success of liberty in other lands." (Bush White House archives, 2001)

### ***Return to diplomacy***

Furthermore, a shift could be noticed in the way of implementation of policies whereby President Bush and Secretary of State Rice stressed on the need of diplomacy to forward American policies, "President Bush emphasized that this transformational foreign policy would not be imposed from abroad or implemented by military means" (McCormick, 2009: 255). As after the disastrous Vietnam War U.S foreign policy stressed on the need of moral ground and diplomacy to retain its position in the international system, a very similar approach can be noted in this case too.

The focus on multilateral diplomatic initiatives began with rebuilding the relations with Europe, the president himself and the secretary of state both visited Europe time and again to assuage the alliance. The administration appointed new pragmatists like, Nicholas Burns, Robert Zoellick and Christopher Hill to important administrative posts who stressed on building better relations through understanding and negotiations (Bush's New Cabinet: Changes in Attitude, 2004).

The administration deliberated efforts to initiate multilateral diplomatic initiatives not only with Europe but with countries like India, China and with two of the 'axis of evil' countries Iran and North Korea. The United States worked with France, Germany, Great Britain in the negotiation process with Iran and led the Six Party talks to dissuade North Korea's nuclear ambitions. A change was even noticed in the administration's way of working with international organizations. It supported the UN efforts to solve the Darfur crisis and actively engaged in the Middle East Peace negotiations in 2007 and 2008. Despite such efforts the incidents of Iraq war and the unilateralist stance it reflected continued to draw large scale criticisms from public,

U.S Congress and internationally. In the 2006 Pew survey of global attitudes toward the United States, in only three countries of the ten surveyed outside Europe did a majority of the public view the United States favorably; these were Japan, India, and Nigeria (Pew Global Attitudes Project, 2006).

As the Bush administration's second term was nearing the end the scholarly opinion about U.S power and dominance was clearly getting bifurcated in two directions. On one side of the opinion was that U.S was losing its attractiveness as a superpower, Joseph Nye vociferously advocated this point of view. He asserted that the problem for U.S. power in the twenty-first century is the failure to grasp the evolving nature of the international system where more and more continues to fall outside the control of even the most powerful state. Despite The United States hold over traditional means of hard power it will be impossible to attain most of its desired international goals alone (Nye, 2004:72). Similarly, Christopher Layne refutes the argument of benevolent nature of U.S hegemony and believes that major second tier states are engaging in different means of balancing like leash slipping which could ultimately lead to the end of unipolarity. He further asserts that the international system is closer to a multipolar distribution of power (Layne, 2006:37). On the other end of the spectrum there were scholars like Robert Kagan who refuted the various claims of declining position of the United States. Kagan (2008:38-39) dismisses the arguments of balancing efforts of other emerging powers against a rogue superpower. He stresses that irrespective of the opinion polls the great powers are in fact drawing closer to U.S. He predicts that as long as U.S remains at the center of international economy and continues to be predominant military power and potential challengers inspire more fear than sympathy among neighbours, the structure of international system should remain as it has been, with one superpower and several great powers.

### **2.7.3 The Barack Obama Administration (2009-2016)**

On January 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as the 44<sup>th</sup> president of The United States and the nation's first African American President. Turning away from the previous administration's unilateralist military solutions Obama offered the promise of renewed idealism confirming with American values of liberty, freedom and equality. Barack Obama inherited a foreign policy agenda plagued with a global economic crisis, two difficult wars, erosion of the non-proliferation regime by North

Korea and Iran, and deterioration of the Middle East peace process. He started off with the catch phrase of ‘change we can believe in’ promising crucial changes in American foreign policy.

After the Bush administration, America’s role as a global leader stood on unfavourable grounds. The military approach together with the interference in internal matter of other states in the name of democracy promotion presented U.S as a potential threat. Hence, the new administration was quick to promote a benign nature of American leadership and power. Our power grows through its prudent use; our security emanates from the justness of our cause, the force of our example, the tempering qualities of humility and restraint (President Barack Obama's Inaugural Address, 2009). At his confirmation hearing before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Secretary Kerry said, "Global leadership is a strategic imperative for America, not a favor we do for other countries. It amplifies our voice and extends our reach. It matters that we get this moment right for America and it matters that we get it right for the world" (Secretary Kerry's Remarks,2009). The Obama administration defined a new approach to US foreign policy, (re)defined by “smart power”, an “intelligent” power, a new, skillful combination of hard and soft power, which would see America's leadership restored and maintained (Nye,2009).

With Hillary Clinton at the head of the Department of State (2008-2012) the first Obama administration advocated a more balanced use of hard and soft tools, and launched new strategies of “smart engagement” through connectivity and public-private partnerships. Hillary Clinton managed to define a “new public diplomacy” for the twenty-first century, and tried to promote the US as a more benign hegemon. “America cannot solve the most pressing problems on our own, and the world cannot solve them without America. We must use what has been called ‘smart power’, the full range of tools at our disposal.” (Hillary Clinton, confirmation hearing for Secretary of State, 13 January 2009). The essence of smart power was to indulge in a more measured targeted and subtle use of hard power and utilizing soft power to build new cooperation initiatives with US partners, both public and private. Joseph Nye asserts that smart power is always about the balance and not shying away from application of hard power with prudence when required. He acknowledges President Obama’s capability to use hard power components of smart power as in the cases of

sending additional troops to Afghanistan, his use of military force in support of a no-fly zone in Libya, and his use of sanctions against Iran (Nye, 2012:96). However, the smart power strategy has been criticized for being too soft to meet the challenges and at times being criticized over its intention of shielding hard power usage like drone strikes behind the shield of softness.

### ***Tackling the war: the dichotomy of smart power approach***

War was the most crucial issue where the Americans and the world were awaiting a response from the new president. However, specific changes in action were not noticed in terms of immediate issues of war and peace. On his campaign trails, Obama had time and again distinguished the conflict in Afghanistan from Iraq and proclaimed the centrality of the former to America's global struggle against terrorism and promised to resource the fighting in Afghanistan. By January 2009, troop withdrawal had already begun under SOFA agreement signed by the previous president and by October 2011 the president declared the end of combat with Iraq and pulling out of all American troops (Obama White House Archives, 2011).

Despite such convictions of moving away from the previous administrations policies, Obama was soon accused by many for continuing and even implementing similar counter-terrorism and national security policy as his predecessor<sup>8</sup>. Hemmer and Lindsay stressed that despite certain differences in approaches and strategies both Bush and Obama shared core values that shape their foreign policies: the defense of American national interests, the US global leadership and the emphasis on war against the terrorist axis of Al-Qaeda and its supporters (Lindsay 2011).

As Mann states that Obama's commitment to continue the Afghanistan war and his decision for troop surge seems closely aligned to Bush's policy (Mann, 2012). Thus, a mere change in the description of "Global War on Terror" to "transnational global conflict" did not bring any substantial change in the underlying policy drivers of preserving America's security interest and presenting it as a justification for an exceptionalist interpretation of international law (Klaidman,2012).

President Obama's election instilled a perception of significant change among the public that was perhaps higher than that of his intensions. He never rejected the idea of war on terror rather talked about making changes in means and to reduce the extremities of the

Bush policy. President Obama's decision to increase the US presence by committing an additional 35,000 troops in December, 2009 seemed to undermine his parallel efforts to reshape the narrative of US foreign policy. Moreover, his decision to increase predator drone strikes in Afghanistan and Pakistan initiated by Bush sent further mixed messages to those he was trying to persuade and co-opt. Instead of a foundational change in foreign policy in relation to the ongoing wars one can notice a change in the means and approaches. Firstly, President Obama recognized the limitation of American resources thus advocating the approaches to narrow down or restrain the over usage of those (Brzezinski, 2010).

Secondly, president Obama was clear about following a definitive goal which he believed secured American interest and that is to exclusively deal with Af-Pak border and not to stretch it to Iraq. Thirdly, despite the usage of force president Obama believed that American efforts must be built around a more focused politically oriented counter terrorist operation. His larger approach towards Middle East was also to carefully avoid the attempts of democratization and follow a more invested nuanced U.S strategy of engagement in the region.

### ***Pivot to Asia and rebalancing***

Obama's foreign policy thinking took a definitive turn with his Pivot to Asia strategy. At a juncture where war on terror overshadowed every other aspect of America's foreign policy agenda, it was a wise decision to shift attention from a conflict prone middle east to an economically important region of Asia Pacific. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton first outlined the Administration's pivot strategy in her October 2011 article "America's Pacific Century," written for *Foreign Policy*. Here, Clinton stated that 'The United States stands at a pivot point', and that a 'strategic turn to the [Asia] region fits logically into the United States' overall global effort to secure and sustain America's global leadership' (Clinton, 2011). The United States' strategic shift towards Asia would emphasize on the United States' commitment to security in the region, to reengage with regional organizations, most notably the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and pledged to advance US-Asia shared prosperity, through free and fair trade, and economic partnerships such as Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP).

The focus on Asia Pacific was primarily pinned on the salience of Asian economies but under the veil of economy it was also to address China's territorial and maritime overtures in the Indian Ocean coupled with North Korea's nuclear threats adding to the instability of the region. The 'rebalance' towards Asia was ensure both economic and security concerns and to work that through multilateral forums. President Obama initiated the Trans- Pacific Partnership on the economic front in December, 2012 and on the security arena U.S formally joined the East Asia Summit and stressed on the focus on the maritime security. President Obama's stated policy was to accommodate China's rise, stressing economic interdependence and a desire for Chinese cooperation on regional and global issues, while disavowing any US intentions of a new containment, cold war or strategic rivalry.

The pivot strategy was at the heart of the administration's engagement initiatives but has been subjected to various criticisms. John Ford in his article in *The Diplomat* labeled the pivot strategy as Obama's biggest mistake and assessed that the pivot did include some new diplomatic initiatives (such as the rapprochement with Myanmar) but the real problem was the shift in security and defense policy. By putting Asia at the center of its security strategy, the Obama administration inadvertently made the entire enterprise seem to Beijing like an effort to contain China militarily. (Kashmir comment Obama's first foreign policy mistake: Analyst - Indian Express, 2009)

A similar assessment was made in *The Guardian* by Simon Tisdall where he writes that Obama's grand plan to promote interdependent economic self-interest across the Pacific Rim while excluding China – the Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP (similar to the controversial US-Europe Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership or TTIP) – is in deep trouble and China is in ascendancy (Tisdall, 2017).

### ***Vanguard of diplomacy***

At the core of this strategy lies the penchant for diplomatic measures. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton outlined that the Obama Administration recognizes that the United States and the world face great perils and urgent foreign policy challenges including ongoing wars and regional conflicts, the global economic crisis, terrorism, weapons of mass destruction, climate change, worldwide poverty, food insecurity, and pandemic disease...Military force may sometimes be necessary to protect our people

and our interests. But diplomacy and development are equally important in creating conditions for a peaceful, stable and prosperous world. Smart power requires reaching out to both friends and adversaries, bolstering old alliances and forging new ones. This shift in approach toward greater reliance on diplomacy —represents a marked contrast with the approach of President Obama’s predecessor. A fine example of this will be the nuclear diplomacy with Iran, Obama’s strategy for a nuclear deal with Iran built on the efforts of his predecessors to form a broad international coalition willing to use the pressure of tough economic sanctions to induce Tehran to slow their uranium enrichment programs, thereby delaying their achievement of nuclear weapons capability. Serious negotiations on the nuclear deal only began in 2012 after multinational sanctions began to take their toll on the Iranian economy. The negotiations resulted in a historic agreement to end decades of economic sanctions against Iran in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear program. Such reluctance to use force runs into contrast over the administration’s military posture in Iraq and the use of unmanned aerial drones. The Obama administration has made the use of unmanned platforms in the prosecution of counterterrorism operations a signature aspect of its security policy. The result has been an unprecedented expansion of U.S. military power through unmanned drones in Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan as well as Somalia and Yemen. The use of drones, and the civilian casualties they’ve caused, has in turn enflamed public opinion around the world, with the favorability rating of the United States under Obama in majority Muslim countries falling to a new low of 15% in 2012, lower, that is, than the rock-bottom standard set by the Bush administration (Dumb and Dumber: Obama's "Smart Power" Foreign Policy - FPIF, 2023). Torn between idealism and pragmatism Barack Obama came to power with the promise that emphasized the desire to rebuild America’s international credibility, and engage in constructive diplomacy and negotiation with America’s adversaries, Obama raised hopes that the tensions, disputes and crises that plagued America’s regional and bilateral relationships during the Bush years would be a thing of the past. It was rooted in idealism of a benign compassionate American leadership that strives for peace and freedom in the world. The Obama administration has also demonstrated a commitment to reinvigorating US public diplomacy as a central component of America’s soft power. Time and again he has iterated his belief on diplomatic means over military ones and in doing so he has been subjected to harsh criticisms of being soft and incapable of taking hard measures when crisis occurs. Idealism ran into

muddy waters when the Presidential policies allowed use of force in Afghanistan and Pakistan, cyber warfare against Iran or the African and Libyan intervention. So far so his national security strategy has been termed as ‘Bush Lite’ (Feaver, 2010). President Obama appeared as an opportunist who weighs each case on its own merit and lacks the courage to stand behind his convictions. The duality of his actions led critics like Tariq Ali, Noam Chomsky, Jon Pilger and others claim that Obama is as much a part of the US imperial project as Bush was, with shifts in style and approach counting for little. (Noam Chomsky: Obama is ‘an opportunist’ | The Hill, 2023)

However, some has termed his actions as that of a progressive pragmatist. Joseph Nye in his commentary on CNBC states that “Effective foreign policy making requires an understanding of not only international and transnational systems, but also the intricacies of domestic politics in multiple countries...In such a complex and uncertain context, prudence is critical, and bold action based on a grandiose vision can be extremely destructive.. In foreign policy, as in medicine, leaders must "first do no harm." Obama understands that” (Obama the pragmatist—Commentary, 2023).

The other viewpoint is that his pragmatism has portrayed him as weak, indecisive, “pragmatism that appears to lie at the heart of his foreign policy, Obama appears to have an astute ability to see the world not in narrow black-and-white, good v. evil terms, but in the shades of gray he finds it. While Obama may be a soft power president at heart, he is also a pragmatist, a “smart” president, intuitively aware of the hard power world in which he operates and which does, often, constrain his policy choices” (Hallams, 2011).

## **2.8 The structural imperative: Has there been in a change in America’s strategic considerations**

Amidst the contradictions and complexities of Obama’s foreign policy approach there crystalized a discussion about transformation of the power structure of the international system and perhaps Obama marked a strategic shift in American foreign policy. Robert Kagan asserts that though Clinton is termed as first post-cold president yet his foreign policy remained very similar to those developed by the architects of America's post-World War II strategy resting on the three pillars of the primacy of America, now cast as the "indispensable nation"; an expanding alliance of democratic



nations; and an open economic order under Washington Consensus. The Obama administration, he believes retracted from two of the main pillars, firstly, instead of attempting to perpetuate American primacy, they are seeking to manage what they regard as America's unavoidable decline or a post American world where they are accommodating rather than containing the rise of new centers of power and secondly, they in order to engage with the newer powers marked a distance from the old alliance structure and concentrated on building a new consortium of powers where U.S will play the role of convener of all... the Obama administration's de-emphasis of democracy should also be understood as the direct consequence of its new geopolitical strategy: a sign of America's new international neutrality (Kagan, 2010:10-15).

Joseph Nye argued that Obama's smart power approach was pertinent as Obama was faced with the two types of historical power shifts that are occurring in this century: power transition and power diffusion. Obama accepted the rise of emerging powers such as China, India, Brazil, and others with the understanding that a state can wield global power by engaging and acting together with other states, not merely acting against them (Nye,2012:99). According to these views systematic constraints were much higher for Obama administration to practice American preeminence and hence it pursued diverse approaches to forward American interest lending to the duality and complexity of them. What Obama has tried to do, with limited success, is reposition the US in what he understands to be a 'post-American' world; his prescription was to move America away from its role as the hegemonic manager of a liberal order, in which the US both sets and enforces the 'rules of the game' because he understands that enforcing liberal order is both a) a task to which the US cannot currently afford and b) cannot be achieved through coercion or imposition...attempting to shift America's strategic narrative to better reflect the realities of a post-American world, Obama has, however, fuelled perceptions of US weakness and strategic incoherence (Hallams,2011).

Obama may be said to grasp the underlying change in power structure and the systematic constraints it imposes on America. Thus, his approach seemed to be that of presenting The United States as an exemplar state that recognizes the complexity of international relations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the limitations of US power, and the need for more critical and reasoned deliberation.

## **2.9 India's Position in the U.S Strategic Considerations**

The South Asian region is deficient in power and resource calculations or in political, economic and security considerations that could have gained the term 'strategic interest' for the United States. The region is not of immediate threat to its security, economically less lucrative from its Southeast Asian neighbours plagued with poverty, underdeveloped infrastructure and riven with interstate conflicts, it has been mostly viewed as a troublesome region with minor strategic importance. Consequently it has never been a central concern for U.S foreign policy and has most often been treated as a minor part of Near East or Asia Pacific as a result region specific structural long term policies are almost non-existent. As discussed in the previous section, the United States was constructing an international system conducive to its predominance and it was keen on establishing relations with diverse regions to gain the needed support and attribution within the new world. Washington's involvement or intrusions in the region has been mostly due to its global considerations from the Soviet Containment to preventing nuclear proliferation thus, its South Asia policy reflects incremental piecemeal approaches to arising crises or situations that concerns vital U.S interests. "U.S policy in South Asia...a desultory exercise...oscillating between greater and less involvement in the region on an immediate – interest basis without the kind of systematic commitment..." (Gould, 2001:187). However, the existence of vital sea lanes around the region, presence of two discording nuclear powers, the growing Chinese influence and involvement and the menace of terrorism together with other non -traditional security threats have limited the option of the United States' ignorance towards the region.

The Post-Cold War marks "a shifting balance of alignments and arrangements, hostilities and ambiguities, involving both significant regional powers and outside states that have the capacity to influence local events. Further, the spread of advanced military technologies, the emergence of new environmental and ecological issues and the search for cooperation on the regional level are increasingly seen as central, not peripheral issues"(Cohen, 1993:2).

### **2.9.1 U.S and India from Second World War to Cold war: Mutual disenchantment and estrangement**

Indifference, resentment, estrangement are the common words associated with the United States' relation with India. Despite being a pluralist democracy, a growing economy and pre-eminence over the region India has seldom found itself on the right side of America's policies. Prior to the Second World War interaction with India was limited to Christian missionary activities which transmitted uninformed perception of India as a poverty stricken and backward region that had a profound and lasting impression on the United States' foreign policy. The Second World War placed U.S in predicament of being sympathetic to the anti-colonial independence struggle of Indian National Congress and interfering in the policy of Britain, its principal wartime ally. U.S limited its advocacy of India's self-rule when it collided with the wrath and displeasure of Britain. This distanced the U.S from India struggling with its independence and embedded the mistrust in Indian minds of the unreliability and insincerity of American commitments to its proclaimed ideals of anti-imperial values. Support for the independence movement was especially strong among American liberals, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt needled Winston Churchill about India. The turning point in American policy, which anticipated later India-American disputes, was precipitated by the 1942 Indian decision of the Indian National Congress not to support the war effort and to launch the Quit India Movement. With allied fortunes then at their low point, the Congress action placed the Roosevelt administration in a position where it had to choose between Britain, the key ally, then under military attack and India, a potential friend. Not surprisingly, Washington chose Britain. With the onset of Cold war mistrust and indifference grew into estrangement with India's adoption of a socialist economy and a tilt towards Soviet Union and Washington's identification of Pakistan as an agreeable partner to thwart the spread of Communism in the region. Despite the perceived democratic systems of both countries, except for a brief period when Sino- Indian border war coincided with the Cuban Missile crisis, divergent interests characterized bilateral relations.(Kux,1993) New Delhi seldom sided with Washington on issues of Korean War, Hungarian Crisis, Vietnam war and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan during 1980s (Rubinoff, 2001:39). Thus, India aiming for regional dominance along with its tilt towards USSR was viewed by the United States as a threat that could upset the regional balance of

power hence; restraining Indian ambitions by emboldening a constructive relation with Pakistan was seen as a formidable policy during the Cold War. The end of Cold war removed the constant obsession of U.S foreign policy with containing communism, Afghanistan and Pakistan ceased to be of vital strategic interest and was viewed as states in turmoil, the renewed emphasis on expanding engagements with priorities to democratic society and the stress on building the economy by identifying new emerging markets opened up new avenues to revive its relation with India.

### **2.9.2 The nuclear crisis and renewed engagement with India: The Clinton years**

The Clinton administration adopted a policy of ‘Engagement and Enlargement’ to shift the focus of U.S foreign policy from containment to reinvigorated involvement with economic integration. “consolidate the democratic base, help to encourage democracy where possible, contain reactionary regimes that oppose democracy, and remain the world’s chief advocate for liberalizing the world economy” (Brinkley,1997:106)) The strategic discourse was focused on pursuing both democracy and free trade via diplomatic designs to produce willing cooperation (Hoffmann:233).

The Clinton administration’s pledge to support democracies and encourage American investments in liberal economies, it was anticipated that India, as one of the established democracies in Asia with a huge growing market would be a natural choice for immediate positive attention from Washington but the mistrust was so entrenched that the United States was extremely cautious even inimical in its policies towards India. Despite identifying India as one of the ‘big emerging markets’ reduced its foreign aid appropriations by 20 percent, reneged on the delivery of promised cryogenic rocket engines and extended the averse attitude by passing the Brown Amendment in 1995 (Rubinoff,2001:49).

Writing on the critical issues of foreign policy in the Post Cold War era, Mandelbaum argued that the major military danger faced by the United States in the Post Soviet World is not a particular country but rather a trend: nuclear proliferation (Mandelbaum, 1995:22-37). Prevention of nuclear proliferation to new states especially to unfriendly or rogue states became the cornerstone of Clinton

administration's foreign policy. The administration was concerned with test ban and limitation. The administration undertook efforts in support of a Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and extension of Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The role of tests as a deterrence had become obsolete and new types of nuclear weapons should also not be developed.

The Defense Counter proliferation Initiative (DCI) first announced at the end of 1993. It was connected with the Presidential Guideline PDD-13 which wanted to integrate non-proliferation as a military means and defined the objective of the administration with conventional diplomatic and overseas economic instruments (export controls) (Counterproliferation Initiative (PDD 18), 2023).

“From the time nuclear proliferation began to replace the Communist threat as the primary strategic preoccupation of the U.S *vis-à-vis* South Asia, the formulation of policies designed to deal with the issue were beset with cross-cutting perceptions and competing interests” (Gould 2001:196). India's 1974 nuclear test had witnessed the U.S Foreign Aid Appropriations Committee passing a bill to vote against all loans that India requested from the World Bank, however, because of the exigencies arising due to Cold war a series of administrations believed that an aggrieved India might become more aligned with Soviet Russia and thereby aid to India was restored. The U.S senate at the behest of Senator Brown was considering the suspension of Pressler Amendment for one year so that armaments could be sold to Pakistan to reinstate their trust in America and encourage it to proceed with democratization process and desist it from further pursuit of nuclear option. He harped on the litany of services that Pakistan has rendered on America's behalf during the Cold War period in contrast to India which was mostly in opposition. The non- proliferation lobby led by Senator John Glenn stressed on the fact of sticking to the proclaimed nonproliferation policy for every country to cement The United States commitment to the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Further it was argued that more arms to Pakistan would be a destabilizing factor in South Asia because it would impel India towards compensatory arms enhancements and fail to induce either country to give up the quest for nuclear weapons. However emphatic endorsement from Defense and State Departments saw the successful passage of the Brown Amendment.

This disappointed India who was hoping to usher a new relationship based on the Clinton's thrust on democratic engagements and strengthen its belief on Washington's duplicity while dealing with Pakistan. The passage of the Brown Amendment demonstrated the shallowness of U.S policy in South Asia, it still failed to grasp the extent of complexity between India and Pakistan as the fundamental source of cleavage in the region, which was proved profoundly by the nuclear tests conducted by India and Pakistan two weeks apart in May 1998 (Gould, 1997:36). The tests confirmed U.S inability in preventing nuclear explosions and despite its unwillingness, it had to acknowledge the presence of India and Pakistan as nuclear powers and was confronted with the larger challenge of how to dissuade the rival states from engaging in a conflict that might escalate into a nuclear threat. The initial reaction was of punitive measures and stringent sanctions but was later followed by a conscious effort of understanding and engagement.

Post India's nuclear test Prime Minister Vajpayee in a letter to President Clinton laid down the rationale for India's nuclear test in 1998 which was later published by New York Times where the prime minister cited deteriorating security environment due to the presence of an overt nuclear state on India's borders having a history of armed aggression against India in 1962. In consonance to the unresolved border problem that country has materially helped another neighbor to develop nuclear weapons. India has been an unremitting victim of terrorism and militancy sponsored by the same neighbor. Prime minister intended to reason about India's nuclear posture based on such security concerns. Apart from laying down rationale, the letter stressed on how India values its cooperation with the U.S and assured that it will continue to work with U.S to promote the cause of nuclear disarmament. However, it was also pointed out that such commitment extends only to non-discriminatory and verifiable global disarmament measures (NUCLEAR ANXIETY; Indian's Letter to Clinton On the Nuclear Testing, 1998). U.S laid strict sanctions against India on May, 1998 and President Clinton commented that, "I believe they (the nuclear tests) were unjustified. (CNN - U.S. imposes sanctions on India - May 13, 1998, 2023).

India's nuclear test also witnessed the U.S along with China issue a joint statement solely to condemn the act and further offering China a partnership role in preventing "an accelerating nuclear arms and missile race in South Asia". This caused much

disappointment in India about the U.S travesty of justice. The Joint Statement issued by President Clinton with Chinese President Jiang Zemin on 27<sup>th</sup> June, 1998 closely following the UN Security Council Resolution 1172, called on India and Pakistan to adhere immediately to CTBT and to stop all further tests and refrain from deployment of nuclear weapons. They reiterated their firm commitment to NPT and the goal to make India and Pakistan adhere to it 'without any modifications' they asserted that despite nuclear tests, India and Pakistan do not have the status of nuclear weapon states in accordance with NPT. They further mentioned their willingness in assisting to resolve the Kashmir dispute (Sino-U.S Joint Statement, 1998). Thus, the United States levied sanctions on its own and also played an active role in the international platform to initiate sanctions against the nuclear tests. To India the U.S chose China to prevent the nuclear peril in South Asia despite China not being a part of South Asia and Prime Minister's letter categorizing Chinese nuclear threat as an eminent reason for its security dilemma. Together with this the joint statement stressed on convincing India to sign the NPT and CTBT without 'any modifications' and also very strategically placed the Kashmir issue in midst of the nuclear conundrum.

For India, what a stable democracy and free enterprise market could not do, a series of explosions at Pokhran shifted or forced to shift U.S interests or attention to it. The United States by the end of 1999 in a stunning retreat from Capitol Hill's decade long reliance on punitive measures to block the spread of weapons of mass destruction took the initiative in form of amendment to an Omnibus appropriation bill<sup>10</sup> which enabled the President to waive most of the sanctions. Benign neglect or indifference was no more plausible than understanding and continued engagement even negotiations were to be the new mode of conduct in U.S relations with India. For the first time there was an attempt to structure the Indo- American relationship independent of the Indo-Russian or Indo- Pakistani concerns (Hoffmann 2001:51). Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott initiated the longest bilateral dialogue with India, with Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh fourteen times to ensure that the two countries despite differences could manage a constructive relationship in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Talbott, 2004). There was a significant change in the way U.S diplomats addressed India to the media stressing on the point that despite India's nuclear explosions, India was a 'friend' possessing 'huge potential for global leadership' (Rubinoff,1996).

It is undeniable that U.S engagement with India increased post India's nuclear test but other factors like economy can also be considered a potential catalyst for the lifting of sanctions and the warmth in Indo-U.S relations. India first appeared in the Clinton administration's viewpoint in the form of being recognized as one of the 'Big Emerging Markets' by the U.S Department of Commerce. By early 1994, the State Department's judgment on prospects for enhanced level of economic interaction between the two countries was considerably optimistic. During the visit of then Assistant Secretary, Robin Raphel and Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbott the economic ties were duly highlighted as a central factor for deeper cooperation in the coming years. Talbott commented, "India is becoming an increasingly important trade partner. The new opportunities and rapidly expanding economic relationship... will shape our relationship in decades ahead" (Hindu, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 1994). During the same time then House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Lee Hamilton stressed the need for better ties with India for the benefit of American economic interests, "The sheer size of this pool of potential customers starved for consumer goods is a powerful magnet for U.S business" (Hamilton, 1998). In consonance a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed between the two countries in January, 1995 to create Indo-U.S Commercial Alliance to institutionalize the trade relations. Thus, it is quite evident that economic ties were considered to be the linchpin of the basis of the newly founded bonhomie with India in the Post-cold war scenario. The sudden nuclear tests conducted by India compelled the U.S to implement the Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act and levy sanctions as a part of the Glenn Amendment, which authorized sanctions against countries detonating one or more nuclear devices. While most of the international community expressed their criticisms against India's nuclear tests, not all chose to follow the U.S in levying sanctions as a necessary means to condemn India. The Russian official statement expressed "alarm and concern" but at the same time Moscow made it clear from the very outset--in contrast to the US policy--that it is opposed to imposing sanctions against India. Sanctions may only prove to be counter-productive. Moscow would rely on diplomacy to try to bring about a change in India's nuclear policy. Similarly, the European Union, France refrained from levying sanctions and continued their usual economic ties with India. In absence of U.S firms and companies France, Russia, European Union started reaping the benefits of the big Indian market.



By the end of 1998 there were initiatives taken by the Clinton administration to lift the sanctions partially and the process was termed as a step towards positive developments. President Clinton urged the House to provide the executive with the power to lift sanctions as that would enable them to induce India and Pakistan to stop testing or deploying nuclear weapons. The larger impetus behind such a move definitely came from U.S business houses and farm lobbies as Karl F. Inderfurth, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian affairs, said at a hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, "Our purpose is not to punish for punishment's sake, but to influence the behavior of both Governments...We do not wish for unnecessary harm to fall on the civilian populations of either country or on U.S. businesses" (Clinton Seeks Power to Lift India-Pakistan Sanctions, 1998).

Following the President's decision to lift sanctions the Wall Street Journal reported that such a decision 'offers concrete relief to U.S. companies in jeopardy of losing business in India to Asian and European competitors.' The decision of lifting of sanctions helped in restoring competitive financing arrangements for hundreds of millions of dollars of deals involving U.S. firms such as Boeing Co., General Electric Co. and Enron. American investors in India who lobbied fiercely to have certain sanctions lifted as early as possible. Michael Clark, executive director of the U.S.-India Business Council, which has led the U.S. corporate lobbying effort to waive sanctions played an important role. The Farm lobby especially wheat growers were strongly in favour of lifting of sanctions (Rediff On The Net Business News: US senate clears partial lifting of sanctions, 2023). Sanctions were partially lifted on November, 1998 and President Clinton decided to restore the authority of the U.S. Export-Import Bank, the Overseas Private Investment Corp. and the Trade Development Authority to participate in deals in India and Pakistan (U.S. LIFTS SANCTIONS ON INDIA, PAKISTAN - The Washington Post, 2023). Post the lifting of the sanctions there ensued a debate around the effectiveness of levying economic sanctions to fulfill American objectives and Brookings Institute published a report penned by Richard N. Hass which elaborated how sanctions most often hurt American interests more than altering the target state's behavior. In the report Hass underlines that unilateral sanctions seldom works in a global economy and it will tend to impose greater costs on American firms than on the target and in most cases turns out to be

more expensive for American business and farmers suggested that sanctions needs to be imposed on focused areas rather than jeopardizing the entire bilateral relations.

Despite global nonproliferation being one of America's vital interests, the Clinton foreign policy team showcased some genuine sensitivity towards India's legitimate national security interests after May 1998 (Talbot, 2004). The United States unbiased handling of the Kargil issue and the five day long visit of President Clinton highlighted the genuine intention of engaging India. The novelty of the Clinton administration's policy towards India rested on the understanding that engagement was priority and cannot be disrupted for the sake of individual conflicting interest, a continued effort should be introduced to not only to prioritize reconciliation but also to bypass the stalemate and identify other converging interests. "the main question was how the India-US conflict of interest could be reconciled , and if not resolved then at least routinized, managed so as to work on subjects in which US-India interests were converging" (Hoffmann, 2001:234).

The Joint Statement 'A vision for 21<sup>st</sup> century' revealed such conciliatory and constructive attitude on both sides whereby they agreed that they differ on the means to achieve their common goal of reduction and ultimate elimination of nuclear weapons but highlighted their intention of cooperating on other common interests like 'complementary responsibility for ensuring regional and international security', 'stability and growth of global economy', 'common efforts to fight infectious diseases'. Misperception and disengagement have proved U.S inability to gauge or even prevent execrable events like India's nuclear test hence stress was given on understanding engaging on regular basis to build a more formidable relation, "we will seek to narrow our differences and increase mutual understanding" and enduring efforts to be given " to institutionalize our cooperation..." (U.S Department of State, 2000).

The prime concern for the Clinton administration was to maintain the preeminence of America's power position and engaging with major powers to prevent them from developing conflicts that would unnecessarily draw the U.S and to merge them into an integrated economic system. Thus, the stress on engagement was mainly based on great power relations so India despite being a stable democracy was not an immediate priority, similarly the Indian economy despite its booming market demand was not

extremely lucrative to Washington added to it was the misperception about India. It was the third priority of prevention of nuclear proliferation where India became a talking point after it detonated its nuclear option. Thus, the crisis and concern regarding proliferation of nuclear weapons in South Asia made Washington initiate efforts to engage India. When coercion did not yield the desired result the U.S tried the diplomatic way and when negotiations were also not solidifying its interest it sculpted a new way. U.S understood that disdain and indifference towards India and the region made it pay a costly price of recognizing two new nuclear states hence, the new policy was of continued engagement if not on nuclear terms then on other grounds to remain attached and involved and preventing situations to go beyond its desire.

### **2.9.3 The Bush Administration: Transformation of the bilateral relations**

The republican government headed by George W. Bush ushered in the new focus of U.S foreign policy being the pursuit of strictly American interest and for that pledged them to ensure a more robust military posture to deter war, project power and fight in defense of its interests if deterrence fails (Rice, 2000:46). The republican outlining of foreign policy begins with the recognition of the superior position of U.S along with it being the ‘indispensable nation’ and tends to view the U.S as the necessary conciliator, balancer and preserver of the international order. “Great powers do not just mind their own business” (Rice, 2000:46). Thus, to cater to such responsibilities the United States must secure its military power for guaranteeing global peace and security and enabling it to undertake even unilateral action to defend greater goals of nation building or humanitarian purposes abroad (Zoelick, 2000). Such a unilateralist posture together with the reinforcing of its ideas even utilizing force to shape an international order conducive to American interest runs in deep contrast to India's view of a multipolar world order that offers greater strategic space to emerging powers. But this period witnessed the development of mature and structural bilateral relations between the two states, even finding a common ground on the contentious issue of nuclear material.

The Bush administration gave much importance to South Asia as a region since its inception, a reversal from all previous administrations which only paid attention to the region in cases of crisis. The new administration had policy and personnel like Colin Powell in place soon after assuming office exhibiting the interest of continuing the positive tone of Clinton administration's policies towards the region. It is difficult to guess what would have been the course and content of American policies towards the region and India if the terrorist attack on 9/11 wouldn't have happened as the emergence of the crisis of fighting terrorism defined the contours of the relations thereafter. Security issues emerged as the prime objective along with the aim of fighting Al-Queda to the end. With Afghanistan reassuming its position as the area of conflict, The United States attention centered around South Asia, while it deepened its cooperation with India in its fight against terrorism as India offered unconditional support but it also opened up new avenues for Pakistan becoming a frontline state due to its geostrategic position. Thus, the major question was how to manage or balance America's relation towards India and Pakistan as both countries perceive their bilateral relations less on individual terms and more on relative terms.

### ***Policy of De-hyphenation***

Such a sensitive intertwined structure required formulation of such a strategy that could effectively promote U.S interests and enhance cooperation with both without disappointing one side. Keeping in mind that both countries represent different kinds of strategic opportunities for the United States, it must pursue a differentiated policy towards the region centered on decoupling of India and Pakistan in The United States calculation. Policy of De-hyphenation would distinctively stress on three broad features, (a) U.S relations with each state would be governed by an objective assessment of intrinsic value of each country to U.S rather than by fears about how U.S relations with one would affect the other, (b) U.S would recognize that India is on its way to becoming a major Asian power and therefore it warrants a level of engagement far greater than the previous norm and also appreciation of its potential for both collaboration and resistance across a much larger canvas than simply South Asia (C) U.S must recognize that Pakistan is a country in in serious crisis that must be assisted to dampen the disturbing social economic trends by reaching out to Pakistani society than the state (Tellis,2008). Thus the new policy encouraged continuous

engagement with both but while Pakistan was viewed as a vulnerable state which needed assistance to stay stabilized, India was treated in the positive light as a potential rising power which must be engaged for furthering U.S interests.

### *Assisting India to become a major power in the twenty-first century*

Recognition of the potentiality of India having the capability to contribute and influence global affairs was definitely one of the major turning points. The particular attention of the administration on status related matters and the readiness to promote, project and acknowledge India as a rising power marks its distinction from any other previous administrations. Even before formally coming to office president Bush outlined his intention of engaging India. “India is now debating its future and strategic path, and the United States must pay it more attention. We should establish more trade and investment with India as it opens to the world. And we should work with the Indian government, ensuring it is a force for stability and security in Asia (Bush, Reagan Library, 1999). The National Security Strategy document of 2002 mentioned India as a growing world power, “Today we start with a view of India as a growing world power with which we have common strategic interests”(The National Security Strategy 2002, 2023).

The 2006 document outlines India as an engine of economic growth, a vibrant democracy, and a country “poised to shoulder global obligations in cooperation with the United States in a way befitting a great power ”(U.S Department of Defense, 2006). Explaining the new invigorated interest towards engaging and recognizing the potentiality of India, US Secretary of State Colin Powell made some significant remarks to the India US Senate “India has the potential to keep the peace in the vast Indian Ocean area and its periphery. We need to work harder and more consistently to assist India in this endeavour” (Powell, U.S Congress, 2005).

The Bush administration extended its positive attitude towards recognizing India’s potentialities by stressing on its intention to “help India become a major power in the twenty-first century” (U.S Department of State, 2005). This was an extraordinary stance by the United States government in almost expressing a commitment to help India in all means to achieve its long desired major power status. Under the plans, Washington offered to step up a strategic dialogue with India to boost missile defense

and other security initiatives as well as high-tech cooperation, and expand economic and energy cooperation. The United States agreed to expand cooperation with India in three specific areas: civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high-technology trade. In addition, the two countries agreed to expand our dialogue on missile defense. These areas of cooperation are designed to progress through a series of reciprocal steps.

By 2005 Washington announced the most wide-ranging partnership in the history of their bilateral relations, covering the economy, energy security, democracy promotion, defense cooperation, and high technology and space cooperation. The most controversial aspect of the agreement was Bush's commitment to "work with friends and allies to adjust international regimes to enable full civil nuclear energy cooperation and trade with India" (The U.S.-India Nuclear Deal, 2023).

In effect, the US explicitly recognized and cast itself as prepared to legitimize the nuclear weapons program of a non-NPT state that had consistently opposed the global nonproliferation regime. Aside from nuclear cooperation, since July 2005 India and the US have cooperated in a number of areas, including aviation, trade and investment, business (through a high-powered CEO forum), agriculture, energy, science and technology, defense, disaster relief, democracy promotion, and maritime cooperation. In 2007, India hosted a major round of naval exercises (part of the "Malabar" series) in the Indian Ocean with 27 warships from countries including the US, Japan, Australia, and Singapore. During her visit to the subcontinent in March, 2005, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice expressed the willingness of the administration to engage India by discussing highly contentious security, energy, and economic issues including India's quest for a seat on the United Nations Security Council, alternatives to the proposed Indo-Pakistani-Iranian gas pipeline for securing of energy resources for India, and the stimulation of the moribund Indo-US bilateral trade (U.S Department of State, 2005).

Asked in an interview about the reason behind the sudden urge to recognize India as a strategic power, a rising power; Nicholas Burns, US Under Secretary of Political Affairs replied "think what accounts for it is that in the modern world in our century, great countries, countries with influence, countries that have the ability to affect events obviously want to stand for the same thing. They want to stand for, in the case of our bilateral relationship, increasing trade between our two countries. We certainly

feel the beneficial impact of what India contributes to our economy, with all of the Indians working in our hi-tech sector in the United States. I think there is an inclination that in this part of the world we'd like to see stability and the Indian-American relationship to stand on its own. It's not a singular relationship... you are going to see both of our countries working on a wide range of issues and cooperation – economic, agricultural, science, environmental and defense” (U.S Department of State, 2005).

Teressita C. Schaffer advocates that since September 11, U.S foreign and security policy has continued its gradual shift away from Eurocentric structure of World War II to an increased focus on Asia. The United States has found it essential to broaden its network of strong friendships and strategic understandings in the area between China and the trouble spots in the Middle East. U.S being already occupied in tackling the menace of terrorism found a stable democratic growing India to be an easier party to engage in its efforts to manage the power balance in Asia (Schaffer, 2010:11)

David Malone argues that the intense negotiations that the Bush administration undertook for the nuclear cooperation agreement with India was to balance out the failures of its other foreign policy matters, “foreign policy achievements of the Bush administration were few, with the Iraq war widely seen as a strategic disaster for the US ... With developments in Afghanistan also unfavourable, and the NATO alliance coming under some pressure as a result, the President's team identified success on the India front as the most positive potential remaining foreign policy legacy item in the Bush administration's portfolio” (Malone & Mukherjee,2009:1065). The Bush administration's expansive view of India's significance can be seen as an effort to develop for it a role in which it might support the US in international affairs, and by serving as a "junior partner" in controlling the Indian Ocean (Malone & Mukherjee, 2009:1065).

In 2008, Condoleezza Rice, then Secretary of State, proclaimed "investing in strong and rising powers as stakeholders in the international order" as one of two pillars of America's "unique" realism (the other being support for democracy in weak and poorly governed states). A strategy that gives such powers a greater stake in the international system is likely to preempt future instability in international system

(Rice, 2008). In 2006 Bush's nuclear negotiation team testified to congress that its intention was to "lock [India] in" to a deal before moving to tie down and restrain the country's nuclear potential in nonproliferation discussions (Carranza, 2007). Whatever strategic interest the Bush administration might have behind its motive of engaging India it is undeniable that the serious efforts and intense negotiations it has undertaken not only with the Indian side but also in convincing its own Congress, in addressing international forums and speeches and invested time and strategic thinking to tide over the divergences. For a regional power like India, status attribution is one of the most crucial factors and Bush surely showcased India's potential on the global stage in an outstanding manner. For the Bush administration which sought to preserve U.S primacy by deterring the rise of new powers to recognize and even pledge support for an emerging power in such bold words to be surely considered extraordinary. Perhaps makes one think that India's rise is not considered to be of any threat to U.S primacy or India's rise in the region is beneficial to deter the rise of any other power which is considered a threat to U.S. Hence, emboldening India is in the larger interest of preserving U.S pre-eminence by the Bush administration.

#### **2.9.4 The Obama years: Defining partnership of 21st century**

At the end of the Bush Presidency the engagements with India remained one of the stalwarts of its foreign policy. With the new President in the office the pressing question was whether India would still be a priority and the agreements signed will be given due diligence? The new administration's crucial focus was on devising methods to wind up the ongoing wars in Iraq or Syria and to rectify the unpopular unilateralist policies of the last administration. Added to damage control was the threat of a looming financial recession that had the capacity to destabilize America's economic position. Faced with such immense tasks India was definitely treated as low priority at the inception as it was not a direct threat to US interests, economic and trade dividends were not promising and India refused any military cooperation in Iraq or Afghanistan ('Afghanistan, Pak, and not India were top priority for Obama' - The Economic Times, 2017)

While India's unconditional support to fight terrorism made it a definite partner in the US war on terror, India's reluctance to assist militarily to end wars in Iraq and Afghanistan diluted its priority in the immediate interest of the Obama administration.



The initial response of the administration towards India raised conjectures about the decline in the Indo US relations. There was substantial delay in appointing ambassador to Delhi, Secretary of State Hilary Clinton skipped India in her first multinational visit to Asia in February, 2009. The exclusion of India from the Asian tour was regarded as a caution sign. Despite a new report from the Asia Society's Task Force on U.S. Policy towards India, "the compatibility of our values, our strengths, and our global visions offers a unique context for us both to craft an ambitious agenda for the years ahead—for, unusually among two powers, we have no intrinsic conflicts of interest" (Delivering on the Promise: Advancing US Relations with India, 2009).

And the reassurances proffered by White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs that "the President believes that obviously the U.S. and India are natural friends and natural allies," the nascent strategic partnership being given short shrift—if it is not being subordinated outright to short-term (and shortsighted) preoccupations (Obama man says deeper ties on the cards, 2009)

### ***The mismatch approaches***

The new administration seems to have signaled that its approach to south Asia in so far as it can be said that it even has a coherent policy towards the region will be focused predominantly on Afghanistan and Pakistan. It signaled an integrated approach one that bracketed India with Pakistan breaking away from the 'de-hyphenation policy' of the Bush administration. More disconcerting was the Obama team's apparent acquiescence to a moral equivalency between India's control of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan's support of jihadists across the entire region. On the very eve of his election, Barack Obama repeated this argument and raised the possibility of appointing former-President Bill Clinton as a special envoy to deal with the Kashmiri question, causing Asia security expert Selig Harrison to observe in a Washington Times commentary that: President-elect Barack Obama has made his first big foreign-policy mistake—pledging U.S. intervention in the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan. While the Kashmir issue "is obviously a tar pit diplomatically," he announced, one of the "critical tasks" for his administration will be "to get a special envoy in there to figure out a plausible approach" (Kashmir comment Obama's first foreign policy mistake: Analyst - Indian Express, 2009). Leading few observers in India believes that "Obama's promised new framework for

South Asia, however, has several negative consequences for the region...” (Rajamohan, 2009: 174).

It was the visit of US Secretary of State Hilary Clinton to India in July, 2009 that was largely seen as a stance to revive the bilateral relations. The five days visit was mainly centered around facilitating arms trade, meeting business leaders to tap on various sources to support the recession hit economy. Despite it being the first high level official visit the agendas for engagement were limited and opened up areas of disagreement especially on climate. She signed two important new agreements, a Technical Safeguards Agreement permitting U.S.-licensed components to be used on Indian civilian spacecraft, and an agreement creating a \$30-million endowment to fund science, technology, and innovation. The Indian government settled the end-use monitoring arrangements needed to permit major military sales from the United States and pledged to designate two sites for U.S. companies to build nuclear facilities. But she stuck to only sympathetic symbolism towards the terrorist attack showcasing the importance US attaches to Pakistan in its central aim of finding a solution to the Afghanistan problem. Divergences were visible on climate change issues with Minister of Environment and Forests Jairam Ramesh told her, "There is simply no case for the pressure that we, who have among the lowest emissions per capita, face to actually reduce emissions? We also face the threat of carbon tariffs on our exports to countries such as yours." (Clinton visit: India's concerns not addressed - India Today, 2009). Thus, it was clear that despite having common interests in restricting terrorist attacks or in regulating climate changes both the countries differed in their means of achieving them.

### ***The economic motive and diplomatic overtures***

A boost was given to the bilateral ties by the Obama administration by inviting Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as the honored guest at the administration's first State dinner whereby President Obama reiterated the common bond between the countries and defined India as ‘indispensable nation’ and thereby utilizing the opportunity to build the bilateral relation into one of the ‘defining partnerships of 21<sup>st</sup> century’ (India indispensable to a future we want to build: Obama - The Hindu, 2021). It further extended in the form of Obama Singh initiative to deepen educational ties between the countries. However any major breakthrough deal did not take place. While preparing the ground for President Obama’s visit to India, US Assistant

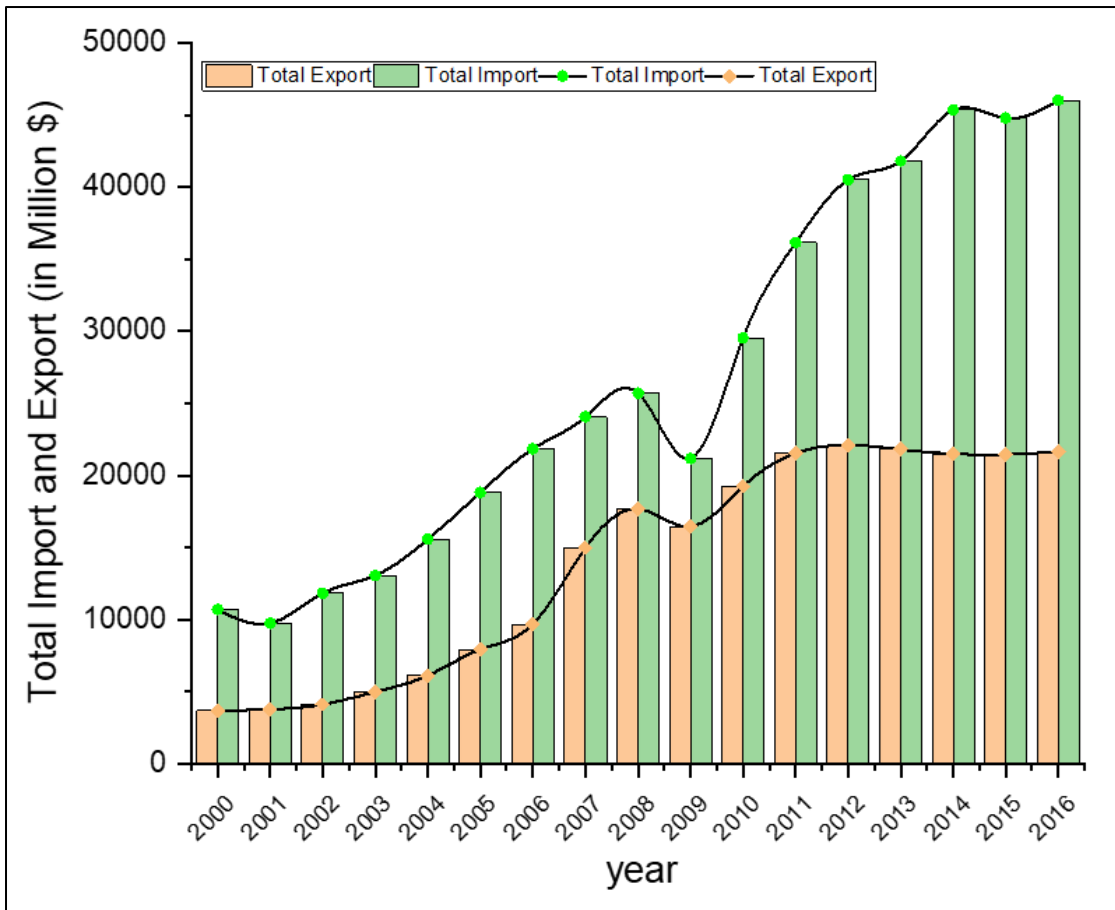
Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, Robert O. Blake, Jr. in his speech at the Chicago Council of Global Affairs explained the importance of India as a partner and outlined the following points, “I thought I would use this opportunity today to speak to you about why India is such an important partner for the U.S. First, some of the headline statistics about why India is important to U.S; 1. Fourth largest economy in the world; 2. One of the fastest growing economies in the world, thanks to the reforms begun by Prime Minister Singh. It has a vibrant private sector and the largest number of billionaires in Asia... We recognize that advanced developing countries like India, China, Brazil, and South Africa have a game-changing role to play, particularly in the issue of market access for the least developed countries. The April 2009 IMF economic outlook projects that 58% of global economic growth between now and 2014 will be provided by these advanced developing countries. The United States will continue to urge India and the other advanced developing countries to act on that potential ” (Remarks at the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, 2010).

He further acknowledged India’s contribution towards Afghanistan reconstruction and underlined the value of defense sales to the recession hit US economy, “Defense sales are also of great interest to American companies. We’ve already seen some very important defense sales just in the last year or two of C-130Js and P-8 maritime patrol aircraft. The Indian government also recently submitted a Letter of Request for 10 C-17 aircraft worth about \$2.5 billion”( U.S Department of State, 2010).

Thus, in the backdrop of a recession hit U.S economy, a booming Indian market along with its penchant for purchasing defense equipment were the main catalyzing forces behind the three day presidential visit to India in November, 2010. If President Bush’s visit in 2006 there was one single overarching understanding which overshadowed others, President Obama’s visit was a multifaceted one. Without a major policy or deal on the platter the administration was keen on touching plethora of understandings in nearly every conceivable area of national activity stretching from agriculture to space, from education to defense, from energy to health, from higher education to trade and commerce and from counter-insurgency to the promotion of a nuclear weapon-free world, building on public diplomacy and people to people contact in tune with the administration’s policy of public diplomacy 2.0.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Details of the agreements signed during President Obama’s [https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India\\_US\\_brief.pdf](https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India_US_brief.pdf), a detailed description of the fact



**Figure 1: Indo U.S Trade in terms of Total Imports and Total exports (2000-2016).**

Source: <https://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c5330.html>,  
<https://indianembassyusa.gov.in/pages/MzQ>,

The administration was successful in signing deals worth \$ 10 billion which will further create over 50,000 jobs in U.S. it took a cautious step to remove ISRO, Bharat Dynamics Ltd., DRDO from the Entities List and showcased support for India’s membership in export control regimes like the Nuclear Suppliers Group, Missile Technology Control Regime, Australia group (an informal grouping on nuclear exports) and the Wassenaar Arrangement (a treaty that controls exports of conventional weapons). Though obvious benefits to India it also helped to increase jobs in U.S and India's membership of export control regimes while enabling it to be a part of their rule setting mechanism also draws it into the international nonproliferation architecture which has for long been a US goal. The Indo-U.S

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sheets, press briefings and remarks of the Presidential visit can be found at <https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/sca/ci/in/strategicdialogue/c46005.htm>

bilateral trade has shown remarkable improvement over the years from a meager 3.6 billion dollars as exports from India and 10.6 billion dollars as imports from U.S in 2000 it grew to 21.6 billion dollars in exports from India and 46 billion dollar imports in 2016. Figure 1 shows the upward graph of bilateral trade over the years. In 2023, U.S emerged as India's biggest trading partner at 128.55 billion dollars. U.S is one of the few countries India has a trade surplus. In the joint statement there was a categorical call for 'elimination of safe havens and infrastructure for terrorism and violent extremism in Afghanistan and Pakistan' and for bringing 'to justice the perpetrators of the November, 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks (Obama White House Archives, 2010). While recognizing India's rise and that U.S India partnership was indispensable for global peace and security, President Obama in his address to the joint session of the Indian parliament declared his support to India's bid for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council. This acknowledgement and support to India's long desired bid to accommodate itself in the global power system was met with immense positive response. The sole declaration propelled President Obama's trip from being an important one to a historic one.

Karl F Inderfurth, who was Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs in the Clinton administration, and Nicholas Burns, who was Under Secretary of State in the Bush Administration, commented that Obama's endorsement during his address to a joint session of Parliament thus made his visit to India transformational in a sense as had the trip by Clinton in March of 2000 and Bush in March 2006. Inderfurth further asserts that, "Obama's endorsement was 'a bold move because this was something his predecessors had not been able to announce for a variety of reasons'." (How Obama turned his visit into a historic one, 2010).

Terming the President's trip to India "a very successful visit" Burns said, "He managed to provide both energy and ambition for the future of this very important relationship. Specifically, the defense agreements, the decision on export controls and the announcement of support for India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council, will all bring India and the US to a closer strategic partnership"(Burns, 2010)

Despite it being a historical declaration it had no immediate significance as UNSC reforms are still a farfetched idea. Hence, why it is considered a landmark in strengthening Indo U.S relations? Firstly, it was a major diplomatic gesture to

demonstrate that U.S completely supports India’s rising influence and is committed to help it achieve its stature on the global scale “ India is not simply emerging, India has emerged, it captured the spirit of his address, bring India into a full partnership with the United States and the international community...And, in doing so, the decision not only to support India's bid for a permanent seat in the Security Council, but also bringing in India and supporting India for a place on these export control regimes - the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime -- all of which are a part of making India a full-scale stakeholder in the international community," (How Obama turned his visit into a historic one, 2010). Secondly, it was a major symbolic move to ease the concern on the Indian side that it is sliding away from the priority position it enjoyed during the Bush presidency. “The President probably calculated that making the grand diplomatic gesture of supporting Indian candidacy on the Security Council, while unlikely to happen anytime soon, would be the best way to dispel Indian skepticism toward his administration for earlier missteps on Kashmir and outsourcing issues” (Curtis, 2010).

Thus, other measures that Obama unveiled, like easing of export control on Indian organisations and support for Indian membership in nonproliferation groupings are more likely to have a concrete and near-term impact on India's relationship with the global nonproliferation regime as well as its ability to fill its high-tech defense, nuclear and space requirements.

### ***The concern over Asia Pacific and India as an agreeable aide***

While endorsing and acknowledging India’s rise, President Obama harped on certain regions or areas where U.S expects India to play an active and effective role, the foremost importance was given to the Asia Pacific region. With Secretary of State Hilary Clinton’s visit to India to initiate the Security Partnership of 21<sup>st</sup> century with stress on ‘shared Interest in Asia’, followed by the U.S India Strategic Dialogue on Asia Pacific Region later in the year. This definitely indicated a renewed inclination of the U.S administration towards the region in which they wanted to incorporate India’s participation in ensuring the region specific initiatives.

While highlighting the importance of the Indo U.S strategic dialogue on Asia Pacific, Robert O. Blake, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs

asserts, “a growing proportion of the world trade now is moving through these waters, from the gulf and elsewhere, through the Straits of Malacca and into the Asia Pacific region...And really the center of gravity of all of our foreign policy is shifting to Asia, so it’s extremely important that the United States and India, the two – the world’s two largest democracies, two of the world’s largest market economies, and two of the countries with, again, these converging values and interests, work extremely closely together on a lot of what are going to be quite important issues in the Asia Pacific region, things like maritime security and anti-piracy and so forth.. we see some very important opportunities to work more closely with India, first, to develop a new Silk Road strategy in South and Central Asia to help Afghanistan integrate more fully into its neighborhood, and secondly to work more closely with India in the Asia Pacific” (Read out on Secretary of State Clinton's Trip to India, 2011).

With President Obama’s re-election in 2012, the initiatives further crystallized into a broad structured policy of the administration namely the rebalance to Asia or more commonly known as Pivot to Asia. The policy marked a shift in emphasis from Europe to Asia in U.S. diplomatic and defense strategy, whereby the Obama administration was trying to extract itself from the various conflicts in the Middle East and was focused on maintaining a dominant strategic presence in Asia Pacific. The new policy of pivot to Asia was based on two major elements:

- (a) Recalibration of its military resources to the Asia-Pacific. In January 2012 the Pentagon released a vision document, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century defense, reiterating the U.S. military commitment to the region. Subsequently over the years the Department of Defense announced shifting of a considerable amount of U.S naval and air force assets to the region.
- (b) The pivot strategy is premised on the need to cultivate strategic partners in the region in order to balance the parlous economic condition, the sharp decline in defense budget and the growing domestic divide on the United States’ overarching role in the world. It was aimed at nurturing effective partnerships with selective partners to help take up the responsibility of maintaining regional stability and give impetus to the various strategies of the policy.

This is where India found its position within the larger policy. Hilary Clinton in her key foreign policy article stressed on the significance of India in the new U.S approach to Asia, “the Obama administration has expanded our bilateral partnership; actively supported India's Look East efforts, including through a new trilateral dialogue with India and Japan; and outlined a new vision for a more economically integrated and politically stable South and Central Asia, with India as a linchpin” (Clinton, 2011). Former secretary of defense Leon Panetta in his visit to New Delhi in June 2012 described the India-U.S. defense partnership as a linchpin of the United States’ rebalancing strategy and requested that New Delhi play a bigger role in the security of the Asia-Pacific (Partners in the 21st Century | Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2023).

However, such elaborate exposition of India as an important partner in the new approach should not be corroborated with India being the central focus of the strategy. Clinton very clearly mentions that the fulcrum of the policy rests with their treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand. She brackets India with Indonesia as key emerging powers that the administration wishes to work with while labeling China as the most prominent emerging partner (Clinton, 2011). As a linchpin to the strategy apart from the regular strategic dialogue and cooperation in the regional institutions, the bilateral cooperation was strengthened in the defense field. As early as 2013 with the Indian Prime Minister’s visit. They emphasized the need for more intensive defense cooperation on both sides. The leaders reaffirmed their desire to further strengthen defense trade cooperation, endorsing a Joint Declaration on Defense Cooperation as a means of enhancing their partnership in defense technology transfer, joint research, co-development, and co-production. President Obama encouraged the further participation of U.S. firms in partnering India’s efforts to enhance its defense capacities. President Obama also welcomed India’s decision to participate in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) naval exercise hosted by U.S. Pacific Command in 2014. President Obama duly highlighted in his official remark the core elements of Indo- U.S global partnership are trade, investment and economic partnership. Though Indo-U.S bilateral trade has crossed the \$100 billion mark yet again U.S China trade stands at \$560 billion and he stressed on how India needs to unleash its potential to enhance its position. (Remarks by President Obama at U.S.-India Business Council Summit, 2015).



However, India was not party to any of the foundational or enabling agreements with U.S meant to improve interoperability between militaries and allow transfer of high end military platforms. It was only in August 2016, after years of prolonged negotiations and consultations and a new BJP government in New Delhi, they signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum Agreement (LEMOA). A tweaked version of the original Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), LEMOA was supposed to give access to both countries to designated military facilities on either side for the purpose of refueling and replenishment but requirements were agreed to be applicable on a case by case basis. Despite being helmed as a linchpin of the foreign policy centerpiece of the Obama administration's second term there were hardly any outstanding development or breakthrough in the bilateral relations as one would have expected.

***Not to vouch on deliverables: Towards a sustainable partnership***

Perhaps the takeaway of the Obama administration's relation with India was paving the way towards the mature understanding that a sound and sustainable U.S policy towards India should more accurately reflect continued efforts to forward multiple American, Indian global interests. The sustainability of relations should not be depended on constant scrutiny of the number of milestone agreements signed or recurring deliveries after every dialogue or meeting. Robert O. Blake, Jr., Assistant Secretary, Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs very aptly remarked when being questioned on the utility of the bilateral strategic dialogue, "I think people sometimes misunderstand the purpose of the strategic dialogue. The strategic dialogue is really not about deliverables. I saw some mention in some of the press that there haven't been a lot of deliverables. That's not really the goal of the strategic dialogue. The goal of the strategic dialogue is to first review progress on the wide, wide range of bilateral dialogues that we have and then chart a way forward on those, and then also, more broadly, to set our strategic engagement for the next year (Blake, 2013)). This acknowledged that U.S and India can differ in their assessment of near time needs and interests. Hence continued efforts of engagement over multiple factors should be seen as willingness on both sides to nurture the relationship and exhibiting the value they attach to each other. India's special treatment would only continue if it serves major U.S national interest across bilateral, regional or global issues.

Secretary of State Hilary Clinton in her op-ed article duly explains the expected contours of U.S India bilateral relations, “There is less need for dramatic breakthroughs and more need for steady, focused cooperation. So together, we are building a mature partnership defined by near- constant consultation aimed at working through our differences and advancing the interests and values we share. This kind of daily collaboration isn't always glamorous, but it is strategically significant... A strategic partnership isn't about one country supporting the policies or priorities of the other. It's about working together on shared goals and preventing short-term disagreements from derailing long-term cooperation” (‘US determined to keep ties with India growing’ - The Hindu BusinessLine, 2023).

## **2.10 The United States’ strategic imperative in warming up to India in the Post Cold war period**

The United States post cold war strategic worldview has been dominated by the urge to retain U.S primacy by constructing an international system reflecting its niche interests as that of global interests on similar lines with its view developed at the end of second world war- open, integrated with potential for free trade and democratic engagement. The administrations have largely concentrated on maintaining relations with great or major powers rather than concentrating on region specific policies. India has never been a central strategic interest for the United States thus, the imperatives to engage India occurs from other vital interests in which India can be a composite part. So there have been India centric approaches but hardly any India only approach. Washington’s strategic imperative in warming up to India in the Post Cold war period may be understood on the following lines:

- a) In terms of larger global considerations of policies of the United States. As in the case of its global war on terror which not only rested on the notion of coalition of the willing but India was also a part of the region. Similarly the pivot to Asia policy of the Obama administration which was directed towards aligning all states of the Asia Pacific region to form a multilateral coalition to be led mainly by American initiatives and actions in the region and India was perceived as part of the greater strategy to share the responsibility of maintaining stability in the region.

- b) In case of crisis, instability that could jeopardize greater American strategic goals. When India tested its nuclear bombs the response from Washington was to immediately engage with India to stall any further damage to its global policy of nuclear nonproliferation.
- c) To deter a potential rival in the region. Though Washington or New Delhi has never acknowledged China as a common threat but U.S seems to be engaging with other potential powers in the region to ensure a system of checks and balances that will be influenced by Washington but will appear as regionally induced balancing towards a greater threat.
- d) U.S wants to bind India's rise within its own parameters. The enthusiasm and encouragement that has been showcased by consecutive administrations in recognizing India's potential to become a major power which seems to be in contrast to the natural instinct of a superpower will inevitably try to contain the rise of new centers of power that might challenge its favoured international system. The imperative of such support may be deciphered as the strategy of binding the rising power within its desired perimeters by being accommodative and entwining it in various initiatives designed by the superpower itself.

India is predominant in its region and much of its predominance stems from its capacity to act alone on diverse matters of the region. It perceives its rise on its own terms through a set of strategic considerations within the structural constraint of working in an international system dominated by a single power. Are India's strategic considerations in tune with Washington's? The next chapter will try to deal with India's strategic worldview and how it perceives the United States within it.

## 2.11 Chapter Brief

This chapter tries to understand the strategic worldview of the United States and to trace how India is positioned within it. The chapter begins with tracing the formation of a distinct foreign policy of a young United States acting within the British dominated international system to its emergence as the sole superpower. The objective of the chapter is to outline the changes or continuity in America's strategic viewpoint, essentially stressing on the post-cold war period. The chapter offers a brief account of American foreign policy to underline how certain ideas and strategies developed at various times and situations stayed and informed the U.S foreign policy even after it attained the superpower status post 1990's. The post-cold war period is dealt in two parts, firstly, it discusses the various contending U.S foreign policy schools as they developed their own arguments regarding preservation of American power, Secondly, it deals with the post- cold war administrations and how they have perceived and acted on American strategic worldview. It considers five competing grand strategies Primacy, neo-isolationism, selective engagement, liberalism and offshore balancing and analyzes their core objective, means, threat perceptions etc. to understand how different approaches seek to uphold American Primacy.

The successive administrations protected and promoted American primacy through its policy choices while the Clinton administration focused on outlining a new world order based on free market, democratic peace, bereft of the threat of nuclear weapons, working through multilateral institutions making others believe that these are the common beneficial goals of the post cold war world and thereby ensuring American acceptability indirectly, the Bush administration proclaimed to pursue distinct American internationalism based on power projection and ability to exercise power unilaterally. Both the administrations stressed that the rise of any rival power even at regional level that aspires to a larger role and seeks to challenge or alter the established order must be deterred and prevented however, there seems to be a shift towards a policy of accommodation or absorption can be noted in the Obama administration. The administrations gave stress on compliance building and multilateralism followed with diplomatic overtures, aids and incentives and punitive measures in the form of economic sanctions and institutional pressures to persuade or coerce non-confirming elements.

India has never been a part of the American alliance system or any of its security pacts, the two most common and trusted aspects of being an American ally. India has vociferously opposed the U.S conceived grand new world architecture of the nonproliferation regime and even tested nuclear weapons by going against it. It has strong aspirations of becoming a major power and has raised serious disagreements with several international norms promoted by the U.S. Thus U.S optimally should resist the rise of a power that disagrees over established norms and wants to alter the same but successive American administrations are formally supporting India's rise. India's position within U.S strategic worldview is dealt in such perspective and U.S strategic engagements with India in the post-cold war scenario can be understood in the following lines, India is engaged when it provides strategic support to larger global considerations of policies of the United States, in case of crisis, instability that could jeopardize greater American strategic goals, to utilize India's capabilities to balance or deter a potential rival in the region and to bind or absorb India's rise within U.S designed parameters to prevent it being threatening in the future.