

## **CHAPTER IV**

# **AREAS OF ENGAGEMENT: IDENTIFYING INTERESTS**

The last two chapters highlighted the nuances of strategic worldview of U.S and India and how they are positioned within each other's larger strategic vision. The chapters outlined how the difference in relative power position and strategic thinking presents incompatible objectives and contradictory views but also stressed on how cooperation remains an essential element for both to realize specific interests. This chapter will focus on how India and the United States have identified areas of engagement despite divergences on larger strategic vision. The chapter starts with understanding the very strategy of engagement and how it has mostly been upheld as a strategy at the disposal of superpower or great powers and then shifts to focus on how engagement can be a viable strategy for a regional power. The next section presents the case study of India and the United States and how in the Post Cold war scenario the two states have sought to identify areas to engage with each other. The chapter highlights four areas where they have engaged prominently to delineate that despite conjoined efforts to deepen cooperation on areas of common interest they stumble upon the difference over procedural aspects, strategic understanding and most importantly over long term objectives.

### **4.1 The Strategy of Engagement**

A superpower's prime motive is to bolster its predominance and foster a global order conducive to its interests. It can utilize its unparalleled power capabilities to coerce or even threaten others to follow its course but in an international system of sovereign states amongst which some are relatively powerful (i.e great powers) and some are important in various regions of the world such a policy of direct threat or coercion cannot be a long term strategy. Thus, for a long term strategy the superpower needs to engage with greater and lesser powers alike, must invest in building an international structure and make others believe that such a structure will be beneficial to all. The superpower's preponderance not only depends on possessing strength but also how it

wields such strength. So for a sustained primacy of a superpower it needs to engage, invest and employ its might tactfully.

After the Cold War, US primacy reached new heights. America commanded global power- projection capabilities greater than those of the rest of the world combined, and its economy accounted for a quarter of global GDP. Such preponderance made many to comment that, “Nothing has ever existed like this disparity of power; nothing”, (Kennedy, 2002). Even before the United States became the sole superpower it started to construct a preferred international system since the end of the Second World War. America after the Second world war basking in the light of economic and military prowess worked to build an international order based on three broad pillars, (a) institutionalization of the international system stressing on multilateral participation which would benefit the U.S and likeminded countries, (b) building military alliances to ensure stability and security in key regions, (c) providing public goods and wielding its capabilities to address global challenges. Thus, it engaged and invested to lay the foundation of an international system in which U.S would flourish and those who shared its views would also benefit. It gave an idea of a powerful state that believes in providing, taking responsibility and sharing dividends with others who supports its concept of international order.

With the end of cold war the United States stood as the sole preponderant power to shape the new world order and its strive to maintain primacy was strongly based on the above mentioned three pillars but on a much larger scale. Michael Mastanduno in his article on ‘Preserving the Unipolar Moment’ writes that the main objective of U.S post cold war in consonance of the balance of threat theory should be an effort to preserve America's position at the top of the international hierarchy by engaging and reassuring other major powers.(Mastanduno, 1997). Unipolarity is a preferred world order for U.S and to preserve it is the main common objective of the various grand strategies considered in the previous chapter. U.S needs to pursue policies to deter the rise of a rival power and in the same time needs to remain engaged preserving the relations with allies and integrating the others in an interdependent system where they won't perceive the dominant power as threat and make arrangements to deter it. United States engagements in the post cold war order has been extensive and far reaching portraying the reliability and responsibility of a dominant power which

believes in encompassing the opinions of others. Multilateral decision-making procedures may be less efficient, and powerful states are often tempted to act unilateral but multilateral procedures are more reassuring to other states and may help to convince them that their preferences matter, and that they are not simply being coerced or directed to follow the dictates of the dominant state” (Fromkin,1995)

The term engagement simply refers to a mutual understanding established through interactions. However the term has been connoted in U.S foreign policy as a strategy for modifying the behavior of another state. The term was popularized in early 1980’s amid controversy about Reagan administrations’ policy of ‘constructive engagement’ towards South Africa. In the aftermath of cold war, engagement became one of the key words in the Clinton administration’s foreign policy. Hence, engagement represented a kind of strategy in American Foreign policy but most of the literature on engagement has been clothed in ambiguity regarding the nature of the term.

Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. o’ Sullivan (2001) in their article about exploring alternative methods to punitive policies states that it is commonly assumed that America arguably engages states and actors at all times by simply interacting with them but engagement must refer to something more specific than a policy of ‘non isolation’.

They define engagement as a foreign policy strategy which depends to a significant degree on positive incentives to achieve its objectives. They further state that the distinguished feature of American engagement strategies is their reliance on the extension or provision of incentives to shape the behavior of countries with which U.S has important disagreements (Haass, Sullivan; 2000:1-2). Randall Schweller and William Wohlforth differ from the above view of engagement as a specific strategy and refers to engagement as simply a new, 'more acceptable' term for an old policy that used to be called appeasement. But again comments that if any distinction can be drawn between engagement and appeasement, it is that the goal of engagement is not simply tension-reduction and the avoidance of war but also an attempt to socialize [a] dissatisfied power into acceptance of the established order (Schweller & Wohlforth, 2000). According to Alastiar Johnston and Robert Ross, engagement constitutes "the use of non-coercive methods to ameliorate the non-status quo elements of a rising power's behavior.” (Johnston & Ross,1999). Some others have limited engagement

policy to the increasing degree of economic interdependence, like Paul Papayoanou and Scott Kastner define engagement as the attempt to integrate a target country into the international order through promoting "increased trade and financial transaction. (Papayoanou & Kastner, 2000:158). Arguing the above definitions suffering from being vague, limited in scope and clarity Evan Resnick (2001) defines engagement as the attempt to influence the political behavior of a target state through the comprehensive establishment and enhancement of contacts with that state across multiple issue-areas (i.e. diplomatic, military, economic, cultural) coming to Clinton administration's representation of the term which they heralded as key to their foreign policy was mainly to consider it synonymous with their view of American internationalism and global leadership

To briefly summarize the various definitions of engagement as provided above a few important features can be outlined

- Engagement should be considered as an independent strategy with niche benefits and not to be confused with appeasement and interaction.
- Engagement as a strategy resides with a dominant state with preponderant capabilities over others. It is a top down strategy at the disposal of a powerful state.
- It is to be applied to less powerful states which are non -confirmative or threatens to disrupt the structure of U.S policies. The terms 'target country', 'rogue states' or 'rival states' have been used to underline the states to which the strategy of engagement can be applied.
- The strategy of engagement will work through non coercive means, allowance of incentives coupled with diplomatic techniques of negotiation, consultation etc.
- The main objective is to bring about modification in the behavior or mitigation of threats and absorbing the non- confirmative elements within the U.S structure through concessions and incentives across multiple domains.

#### **4.1.1 How does the engagement strategy work?**

Given engagement is a non-coercive method, the modes must be subtle in nature but

the content must be attractive to the 'target state'. Richard N. Haass asserts that engagement strategy depends on who is engaged and what kinds of objectives are being pursued. "Engagement may be conditional when it entails a negotiated series of exchanges, such as where the US extends positive inducements for changes undertaken by the target country. Or engagement may be unconditional if it offers modifications in US policy towards a country without the explicit expectation that a reciprocal act will follow" (Haass & Sullivan, 2000:2). They underline three broad types of engagement, (1) economic engagement will offer incentives such as export credit, access to technology loans and economic aid. Facilitated entry into the economic global arena and the institutions that govern it can be considered as one of the potent incentives in the global market; (2) political engagement can involve the lure of diplomatic recognition, access to regional or institutional the scheduling of summits between leaders – or the termination of these benefits. Military engagement could involve the extension of international military educational training. While the above mentioned areas of engagement are likely to be done with state institutions, they further state that Funding nongovernmental organizations, facilitating the flow of remittances and promoting the exchange of students, tourists and other non-governmental people between countries are just some of the possible incentives used in the form of engagement at the cultural or civil society level (Haass and Sullivan, 2000:2-3). Resnick asserts that engagement as a process aims at developing a relationship of increasing interdependence across multiple domains, it is a quintessential exchange relationship: the target state want the prestige and the material resources that would accrue to it from the increased contact with the sender state, while the sender state seeks to modify the domestic/foreign policy behavior of the target state (Resnick, 2001:560). He also talks about increasing contacts across multiple issue areas like enhancement of diplomatic contacts in the form of extension of diplomatic recognition, promotion of the target state's membership in international institutions or regimes or by enhancing military contacts by arms transfer, military aid or cooperation, exchange and training programs, security building measures or through economic means.

### **4.1.2 When to practice engagement?**

A superpower often enjoys a plethora of strategic choices and has the freedom to exercise them at its own will. Given such a situation when should a dominant power seek to exercise engagement as a strategy?

As a cornerstone of Clinton administrations broad strategic policy engagement was proclaimed as synonymous to American internationalism. It was characterized as a bilateral policy to be utilized to broaden contacts in areas of mutual interest with a target state and not keeping cooperation hostage due to areas of constant disagreements with the same country. It was practiced as a policy to bind states which are in disagreement with the U.S over its chosen policies by tiding over differences and finding new avenues of cooperation coupled with using the superpower might to entice the target country with concessions, technical and economic assistance and even political recognition.

Haass and Sullivan observe that incentives should be used when they are the most sensible option considered alongside other policy choices. Situations where sanctions or punitive measures achieve minimum success and there remains a potential threat to escalate into a crisis that might disrupt the stability of a region in such cases engagement can be a better strategy. Haass further argues that the novelty of engagement as a strategy is that even after the tryst if it fails it opens opportunities and garners support from others to pursue stricter measures down the road. (Haass & Sullivan, 2000:4)

Resnick sees engagement as a quintessential exchange relationship hence engagement can be a fruitful strategy if there are significant material or prestige needs of the target country or the target country must consider the engager and the international order it represents as potential source of the material or prestige resources it desires. (Resnick, 2000:561)

Thus, engagement has been viewed as a strategy available as the disposal of a superior power when it wishes to establish potential ties with a lesser power which exhibits aspects of not being in full conformity with the superior power dominated international system.

### **4.1.3 What does engagement mean for lesser powers?**

Small states, lesser powers or emerging states the terms themselves suggests their limitation in terms of power, resources or influence in comparison to great powers or a superpower. As referred above, engagement as a strategy is optimally an option in hands of greater powers with greater power capabilities to provide incentives or aids to attract other states. (Haass & Sullivan, 2000:4; Resnick, 2001:560). Hence, can the lesser powers utilize the strategy of engagement or does engagement has different manifestations to suit these states?

The relatively small power's structural disadvantages or constraints determine their needs and behavior in international politics (Thorhallsson & Steinson, 2017). Limited power and resources often shrink their attractiveness or bargaining power. Engagement for lesser powers means to engage with all or relevant major powers to establish its presence, to gather help or aid to further its capabilities and also to guard against its specific vulnerabilities or structural uncertainties. Hence, in comparison to engagement strategy of major powers these lesser states views engagement as a broad multi-pronged strategy not to be limited to a 'target state' and optimally as a strategy to attract incentives or support from all relevant major powers. Several studies into foreign policy behavior of lesser states have outlined diverse methods through which they try to engage major powers which brings us to the debates over balancing or soft balancing(Pape, 2005), bandwagoning and comparatively newer concepts of hedging, omni-enmeshment (Kuik, 2021;Goh, 2008, pp. 113–157)

Apart from being a strategy essentially centered around establishing communication and better relations , engagements are sensitive to power equations, pertinence of an issue or strategic needs of both parties at a given time and also affected by the larger international system. It is likely to evolve and can alter its dynamics over a period of time.

Regional powers or emerging powers are comparatively more influential than smaller powers but have limited resources to bring about changes in the international system on their own. Thus, the positions of emerging powers demand particularly complex strategies. Daniel Flemes (2009) writes that emerging powers while choosing strategic approaches have to consider “at least three contextual factors: first, the continuing

superiority of established (the United States) and emerging (China) global actors in terms of material power; second, the fact that regional and global affairs are increasingly interrelated; and finally, the fact that foreign policy strategies are mapped out against the background of an international system moving from a unipolar to a multipolar order” (Flemes,2009:403). These powers are cognizant of their limited material resources when compared with the existing superpower and they are also aware of the fact that the current international system within which they operate is structured by the same superpower. Their aim to influence global politics has to be based on measures to increase their soft power abilities to substitute the limitations regarding material resources. The foremost strategy must be to create rules and institutions of global governance which are to be more adoptive to the new emerging powers. Such strategies are termed by Arnold Wolfers as milue goals which aim to shape the environment within which the state operates and such goals will transcend the national interests and should be shared widely by similar powers (Wolfers, 1962: 73-74). Followed by the desire to shape the international environment is the understanding that they are not capable to do so on their own hence regional powers or middle powers have a tendency to work through multilateral coalitions for the pursuit of common interests in global institutions and international affairs at large (Cooper,1993: 19).

Engagement as a strategy for regional powers or smaller powers works as a means for connecting with relevant major powers and very importantly as a method to develop relations with other smaller powers for bilateral or multilateral cooperation at regional institutional level and that can be extended to forward common interests of developing countries within larger global structures.

## **4.2 United States and India: The Course of Engagement**

In the last two chapters have dealt with the strategic worldview of United States and India and how each of them figures within the other’s strategic thinking. It is undeniable that engagement has been a constant trait of the bilateral relations in the post-cold war period. Given the disparity in power capabilities and strategic interests it will be interesting to note how and in what terms engagement or the efforts to identify mutual interests has mapped out in case of a predominant power like U.S and a regional or emerging power like India. As we have previously noted that



engagement as a strategy in U.S foreign policy has been seen as an option available to great powers to modify the behavior of another less powerful state by providing it with incentives or aids while for lesser powers engagement is a multi-pronged strategy to attract incentives from all major powers and also to garner support from other regional or lesser powers. Thus, the very understanding of the term engagement differs among states of varied power capabilities and hence the choices they make to engage with each other in varied terms should be worth understanding.

United States and India both were former colonies of British Empire and have a history of freedom struggle. The initial foreign policy ideas for both the states were formulated in consonance of larger big power conflict in the international system (the European crisis for U.S and the Cold war for India) and a commonality of thought could be traced in the idea of preserving the newly found independent status by keeping away from big power conflicts which are not of immediate concern. It is undeniable that India and U.S formulated such policies within very different time and context and for India the power conflict it was trying to shield itself from had the United States as a major player. Nonetheless the initial idea as outlined in United States Monroe Doctrine and India's Non-Alignment is motivated by the similar logic that the interest of a newly independent state will be best served by avoiding getting embroiled in great power conflicts. However, the approaches and later how the policies developed were very different and the similarity remained in their penchant for a pluralist democratic political system

While for the Americans the realization of distinct national interest from their colonial masters was rooted mainly in economic and trade benefits while for India it was mostly concerned with attaining political freedom. Despite the fact that United States projects its revolution as an anti- imperial act it was primarily motivated by the desire to establish America as a great territorial and commercial power. Thus, rooted in its struggle against British imperialism seems was aimed its own imperialistic desire to lay the foundation of a new empire clothed in the benign ideals of freedom and democracy. Ensuring its preeminence through the creation of superordinate power relative to ones adversaries has remained the goal of U.S strategy over the years. Anti- imperialism has been one of the foundational principles of Indian foreign policy and wanted to project itself as a vehement supporter of anti -colonial struggle but it also had the desire to maintain regional primacy. The British efforts to expand

economic and political influence and prevent European encroachment in India led to the construction of an India centric regional system. This idea remained with independent India and contributed to its entitlement in the region. A sense of entitlement can be noticed in both, one being surrounded by the idea of manifest destiny while the other despite being a smaller power harped on being the moral harbinger of democracy and freedom in the region.

United States sole interest in South Asia during cold war was to secure alliances and prevent the spread of communist influence (McMohan, 2006). India was opposed to the very idea of being an ally to one superpower. It was eager to craft its own policy and seek its options in an international system that consisted of two superpowers (Harshe, 1990). Thus, India's policy of maintaining strategic independence and later the tilt towards the Soviets stood in contrast to America's alliance building policy as a means of larger communist containment during the cold war resulting in disagreements, misunderstandings and even suspicion.

The end of the cold war paved the way for terms like engagement, common interests and cooperation in the international system with U.S as the predominant power. The United States in order to maintain its newly found status needed to forego its containment policies and initiate engagements across regions and to build an integrated international system conducive to its interests. India bereft of its ally and financial crisis modified its policies together with the realization that with the end of great power conflict it no longer needed to shield itself and it could work towards attaining its desired major power status by larger participation in the international system. Along with India's new found interest of participation came the understanding that the international system is defined in terms of an overarching structure maintained by a single superpower which automatically shrinks the strategic space for a smaller power to craft a niche course and necessitates its engagement with the superpower. Thus United States motive to establish a conducive international system with maintaining influence over various regions preferably through alliances stands in much contrast to India's quest to attain a major power status with considerable strategic freedom to pursue niche policies and further its distinct identity within the structural constraints induced by an international system dominated by one power.

The identification of areas of engagement between U.S and India in the Post-Cold war scenario can be simply traced to the United States' quest to engage various regions with strategic importance and economic benefits and India's quest to derive benefits and status from being in close contact with the sole superpower. However, if we concentrate on how the term engagement has been depicted in the U.S foreign policy language we could not help but notice how it refers to non- punitive means to shape the behavior of a state which is acting in non-confirmation to U.S interests. Two things can be noted in this context: one it refers to states which show signs of differing or threatens to disrupt the U.S led international order and secondly, it harps on offering incentives to modify or dilute the target state's behavior and to bring it within the established structure (Haass & Sullivan, 2000). Thus, India's opposition to NPT, the nuclear test and its strive to choose its own strategic course challenging the central U.S policy of non- proliferation of the Clinton Administration can be seen in the light of why the term engagement has been often used to describe U.S attempts to improve relations with India in the aftermath of nuclear tests in late 1990's.

India's strive for engagement in the aftermath of cold war though often seen in the light of its economic liberalization must be also considered as a strategy to attain its long desired major power status within a new international structure. Through engagements India mainly wanted to expand its communication to increase its influence and bolster its position in regional and global structures. But its strategy of engagement is deeply rooted in its belief of being able to maintain its autonomy in strategic thinking. While U.S pursues engagement to modify the behavior of a target state for India, engagement is a means to develop better relations to attain certain goals but to be conducive to its autonomy in decision making. A chart on high level visits (See Annexure-2) from India and the United States (2000-2016) is prepared on the basis of year and month of visit, person to visit and purpose of visit which clearly shows how regular interactions and engagements have increased over the years also there is a qualitative upgradation in the relation if one sees the contents of the purpose of visits. From visit to engage over multiple issues the purpose of visits have become streamlined, more specific dialogues and agreement based.

Year	Months											
2000 (n= 4)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2001 (n=4)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2002 (n=6)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2003 (n=5)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2004 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2005 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2006 (n= 8)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2007 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2008 (n= 9)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2009 (n= 6)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2010 (n= 6)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2011 (n=8)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2012 (n= 5)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2013 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2014 (n= 3)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2015 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
2016 (n= 7)	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC

**Figure 5** Monthly distribution of high level visits between India and U.S from the period 2000-2016

Fig. 5 shows a monthly distribution of high level visits between India and U.S from the period 2000-2016 where yellow marks single visit and pink marks double visit in the same month. Interestingly the lowest number of visits happens to be in 2014 with only three high level visits lower than the Clinton administration year of 2000. The completion of the Indo-U.S civil nuclear deal after profuse negotiations saw the highest number of high level visit in 2008 of 9 times.

The chapter will concentrate on four issue areas of cooperation to highlight how engagement as a strategy develops when practiced by a superpower and regional power simultaneously with distinct differences over strategic vision and way of operation.

### 4.3 Four Areas of Engagement

#### 4.3.1 The nuclear nonproliferation issue

The issue of nuclear non- proliferation exemplifies how India and U.S having similar aim of limiting proliferation of nuclear power differs over the means to attain it and how despite such mounting differences one can witness engagement being made plausible. In indo- U.S relation the nuclear issue has been the elephant in the room for decades as they both have their own strategic interests tied to it. The United States stressed on nuclear cooperation to bring all nuclear powers within a structure that can

be managed by it and also as a measure to limit the rise of new nuclear powers that might threaten the stability of the U.S led system. The pursuit of this objective has, nevertheless, never been allowed to stand in the way of securing and safeguarding American core interests. Both have gone along at different levels with American nuclear strategy remaining unaffected by the broader foreign policy objective of promoting international non- proliferation. Consequently, pledges on nuclear non-proliferation have been secured from other countries in a bid to check horizontal proliferation, deemed to be a major threat to international peace and stability. Meanwhile, the qualitative and quantitative refinement of the American nuclear arsenal has continued unchecked (Sethi, 1999).

The Nuclear Non- Proliferation treaty (NPT) recognized five countries that had tested nuclear weapons before 1967 as 'nuclear weapon states' and all other parties to the treaty were forbidden to acquire nuclear weapons but they were to receive help in developing peaceful uses of atom. The promise of peaceful nuclear cooperation became more restrictive over time adding new elements of control and surveillance. It also enacted a domestic legislation, the Nuclear Non- Proliferation Act in 1978 which required a non-weapon state (as defined by NPT) place all its facilities under international safeguards in order to be eligible for civilian nuclear cooperation with U.S. it also spearheaded the creation of number of institutions regarding nuclear trade in consonance with U.S laws like the Zanger Committee, Nuclear Supplier's Group. The dominant theme in U.S foreign policy in this area shifted from peaceful cooperation to control. (Schaffer, 2010:91). In a Post-Cold war scenario the Clinton administration made the issue of nonproliferation a cornerstone of its policies as have been discussed in chapter 2. Nuclear proliferation especially to unconventional or rogue states was considered the utmost threat. Hence it played a critical role in securing the unconditional and indefinite extension of NPT, ratified the CTBT (Clinton White House Archives, 1999).

However in U.S sincere efforts to limit international nuclear non-proliferation one could not help but notice that it is mainly concerned with restraining and controlling specially new states from acquiring nuclear power which it considers to be destabilizing for the system but how it never talks about elimination or nuclear disarmament of the existing stockpile and neither has taken the no first use pledge.

Time and again in various security and planning committee reports it has reiterated the importance of maintaining nuclear weapons responsibly. For instance, the document crafted by the White House detailing a national security strategy for the 21st century has explicitly stated that “nuclear weapons serve as a hedge against an uncertain future, a guarantee of our security commitments to allies and a disincentive to those who would contemplate developing or otherwise acquiring their own nuclear weapons. The United States must continue to maintain a robust triad of strategic forces. We must also ensure the continued viability of the infrastructure that supports US nuclear forces and weapons (“A National Security Strategy for a New Century”, 1998). Thus, it retains its nuclear capabilities as a source of power and security and is mainly motivated to restrict or control other state’s nuclear option while maintaining even advancing its own option as a major component to retain its supremacy over others.

If nuclear power is considered paramount to maintaining security and international status then for a regional power that seeks a higher status and has the urge to protect itself from security threats along with the insecurity of surviving in a system with existing nuclear power states obtaining nuclear power seems to be a natural course. India refused to join the NPT time and again as it saw the treaty as discriminatory, as an American initiative to permanently consign it to the ranks of non-nuclear powers and an attempt to eliminate its nuclear option which will not only be a direct threat to its national security but also as foreclosing its rise to the status of a major power (Nayar, 2001:353). In 1974 India conducted its first nuclear testing and dubbed it as a peaceful nuclear explosion and in May, 1998 India conducted its second nuclear test giving India the capability to build fission and thermonuclear weapons. Despite the sanctions levied against it after the first test India went for the second testing showcasing the importance it attached to having nuclear weapons even in an international system bent on structuring a nonproliferation regime under the leadership of the United States. The two standard arguments often iterated in this context are that India faced an adverse security environment in the early 1990’s hence to enhance its national security it needed the nuclear option and the immediate trigger was the upcoming CTBT that was about to foreclose any further testing (Sinha, Indian Express, 1998). Along with the announcement of its nuclear status India rejected the idea of nuclear war fighting. It declared its ‘No First Use’ policy and

iterated its commitment to use its nuclear forces for 'retaliation only' and as a consequence it argued that it could suffice with a limited arsenal Rakesh Sood, former diplomat and someone who was involved in the post-nuclear tests diplomacy, said India had three objectives. "First was to validate new designs to ensure the credibility of the nuclear deterrent as the data set from the 1974 test was limited. Second was to declare that India was now a nuclear weapon state and modify the terms of our engagement with other states accordingly. Third was to generate an acceptance of India as a responsible state with an impeccable non-proliferation record." (How-1998-pokhran-tests-changed-indias-image-Economic Times, 2018).

Such vivid differences in objective and understanding regarding nuclear power and its proliferation issues naturally indicates towards the chances of major disagreement between the two states. What remains striking is how given the major differences in opinion about securing nuclear weapons and the proliferation regime that would have exemplified disengagement turned out to be one of the best example of intended engagement between India and United States. They agreed to devote time and resources, maintained prolonged communication through personnel at various levels and found out ways to negotiate cutting across the major difference of objective and perhaps showed how a concrete area of disengagement can be turned into active engagement.

The initial policy of U.S was imposing sanctions true to its diplomatic culture of indirectly applying pressure and punishment to force a state to change its behavior. After India's 1998 tests, the U.S imposed sanctions to restrict trade with a wide range of defense production organizations and suspended senior level contacts with India's defense department. But on a second note to influence or reform India's and to prevent any further escalation in the matter a strategy of engagement as discussed above was sought, the first step was to initiate a strategic dialogue between then Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott and Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh who entered the dialogue with very different objectives. In Talbott's case it was to persuade India to agree to some form of restraints on its nuclear program whereas in Singh's case it was to gain acceptance for India as a country with nuclear weapons. The United states set certain 'benchmarks' for attaining nuclear limitation, like seeking India and Pakistan's signatures on CTBT, restriction on producing fissile materials and

participation in the yet to formalized Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty FMCT and the most crucial which was referred as 'strategic restraint'. Such benchmarks were in conflict with India's viewpoints and it reiterated its concern about a bias non-proliferation regime for its refusal to sign the CTBT, India didn't agree to limit its production of fissile materials while FMCT was still under negotiation. (Schaffer, 2010: 93). India vehemently rejected the very idea to discuss 'strategic restraint' with an outside power because it would lead it to discuss its strategic interests and security information and thus argued that its no-first use doctrine represented a meaningful voluntary restraint on its nuclear posture. The talks failed to provide means of addressing their nuclear disagreement but significantly contributed to the strategic understanding of each other (Talbot, 2004:146-147).

The next step was to move forward with the strategic dialogue by institutionalizing in the form of agreements to give a concrete structure to the negotiations. With the Bush Administration in power both countries launched a High Technology Cooperation Group in 2002 to provide a forum for official and business representatives beyond high level diplomatic dignitaries to work together to facilitate high-tech trade. The crucial initiative was the launch of 'Next Step in Strategic Partnership' (NSSP) in 2004 designed as a series of reciprocal steps focused on three key areas: Civilian nuclear regulatory and safety issues, space cooperation and expanding high technology commerce. By 2005 the NSSP was successful in a way that India passed the Weapons of Mass Destruction and their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of Unlawful Activities) Act which puts its export control regime in conformity to that of U.S and international export controls. U.S removed ISRO from the entities list and banned the need for an export license for certain "low level dual use items". However, the NSSP mainly dealt with export control affecting those items with dual civil and military use. With dialogue and communication in place under the frame of NSSP there was the initiative to broaden the perimeters by shifting the focus of the engagement to nuclear Cooperation. In July 2005, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and President Bush now in his second term announced a dramatic new initiative on civil nuclear cooperation whereby U.S pledged to make changes in its domestic law and its practice in international institutions to 'achieve full nuclear cooperation with India' and India on its part agreed to formally separate its military and civil nuclear capabilities (Ministry Of External Affairs, 2006). Some ingenious and persistent



negotiations driven by the top leadership in USA and India finally reached culmination in September 2008. On August 1, 2008, the IAEA approved the safeguards agreement with India, after which the United States approached the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to grant a waiver to India to commence civilian nuclear trade.

The 48-nation NSG granted the waiver to India on September 6, 2008 allowing it to access civilian nuclear technology and fuel from other countries. The implementation of this waiver made India the only known country with nuclear weapons which is not a party to the Non- Proliferation Treaty (NPT) but is still allowed to carry out nuclear commerce with the rest of the world.

The U.S. House of Representatives passed the bill to approve the deal on September 28, 2008. Two days later, India and France inked a similar nuclear pact making France the first country to have such an agreement with India. On October 1, 2008 the U.S Senate also approved the civilian nuclear agreement allowing India to purchase nuclear fuel and technology from—and sell them to—the United States. U.S. president, George W. Bush, signed the legislation on the Indo-US nuclear deal, approved by the U.S Congress, into law, now called the United States- India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Non-proliferation Enhancement Act, on October 8, 2008 (Bush White House Archives, 2008). The agreement was signed by then Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and his counterpart then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, on October 10, 2008.

The deal is rightly remarked as a watershed in Indo-U.S relations and a distinct appendage to the international non-proliferation regime. President Bush in the press release of this deal remarked, “this legislation will enhance our cooperation in using nuclear energy to power our economies; it will help us to work even more closely to reduce the danger of nuclear proliferation across the world...This deal enabled India to count on reliable fuel supply for its civilian reactors and for U.S it opened the access to a growing market for civilian nuclear technology”(Bush White House Archives, 2008).

While illuminating the importance of the deal to Indo-U.S relations president Bush mentioned two crucial aspects of why this deal transverse the borders of Indo-U.S and

serves much bigger aspects of U.S strategic interests. He mentioned that the signing of the deal will strengthen global nonproliferation efforts as India agrees to operate its civil nuclear energy programs under IAEA safeguards. He expresses that “This agreement sends a signal to the world: Nations that follow the path of democracy and responsible behavior will find a friend in the United States of America” (Bush White House archives, 2008).

The U.S strategy behind the deal highlights its interest in co-opting non-conformative aspects of any state through its engagement policies as discussed earlier in this chapter and in chapter 2. India has strongly opposed to the NPT and CTBT, the two defined structures of U.S efforts to nuclear nonproliferation. Being a nuclear weapon state it remained beyond the bidding parameters of the U.S efforts and the changing security situation in Asia Pacific where U.S wanted India to be an ally to balance Chinese assertiveness required U.S to find a modified agreement with India that ensures India’s entry in to some kind of nuclear treaty whose parameters can be drawn by America.

The deal initiated a wider and more intense debate in India on questions of national security, sovereignty and democracy that led the government face a vote of no confidence in the parliament. Many opposed the deal on grounds of proposed separation of civil nuclear arsenal as imposing constraints that would make it more difficult to create large nuclear arsenal which they believe is essential for India to be a great power. Vajpayee has argued that “[s]eparating the civilian from the military would be very difficult, if not impossible.... It will also deny us any flexibility in determining the size of our nuclear deterrent.” (Mian & Ramana, Arms Control, 2006)

A different source of opposition to the deal came from India’s left wing parties who expressed that this deal will tie India too closely to U.S policies and it might make India a subordinate ally of the U.S strategic interests in the world. (Yechury-Economic Times, 2015)

The then UPA government stated that the deal provides a formal recognition of India as a nuclear-weapon state, pointing out that the joint statement says India will have “the same benefits and advantages as other leading countries with advanced nuclear technology, such as the United States” (123 Agreement, Ministry Of External

Affairs,2008). More practically, they see it as a way to sustain and expand the nuclear energy program while not restricting the building of what they describe as a “minimum” nuclear weapons arsenal. Singh explained to the Indian parliament on July 29, 2005, that the deal offers a way whereby “our indigenous nuclear power program based on domestic resources and national technological capabilities would continue to grow,” with the expected international supply of nuclear fuel, technology, and reactors serving to “enhance nuclear power production rapidly.” At the same time, he made it clear that “there is nothing in the joint statement that amounts to limiting or inhibiting our strategic nuclear weapons program.” As an assurance that India would have the final say in implementing the deal, the prime minister announced that, “before voluntarily placing our civilian facilities under IAEA safeguards, we will ensure that all restriction on India has been lifted (123 Agreement, Ministry Of External Affairs, 2008). The debates on the Indian side represent a very common dichotomy in Indian foreign policy thinking between that of its penchant for being recognized as a major power for which it needs to get involved, make concrete decisions and commitments and take responsibility in international politics contrasting with its culture of prudence and cautiousness and the fear of getting too involved so as to risk its autonomy in foreign policy making.

The civil nuclear deal is crucial to understand the engagement between U.S and India as it exhibits how an essential point of disgruntlement which had all the possible reason to be continued as a major source of disagreement became a cornerstone of engagement with joint efforts. It highlights how initiatives to adapt, alter and negotiate through continued persistent communication can locate a way of cooperation even in case of a vital strategic difference of objective between that of a superpower and a regional power. It reflects the power of non-punitive, flexible measures of engagement strategies in ensuring cooperation. It ushered the beginning of a new understanding towards building of a strategic partnership between U.S and India.

### **4.3.2 The security & strategic partnership: Asia & Indian Ocean Region**

The south Asian region has never been a strategic priority for U.S and as discussed in

chapter two most of its involvement in the region has been due to rise of any threat or to manage a crisis with the only aim to maintain stability. With the rise of newer challenges and advent of non- traditional security threats U.S involvement have definitely increased but most of it is directed towards protection of its major interests surrounding the region like the vital sea lanes of Indian Ocean. With United States' expanded security considerations and more interest in Indian Ocean region and Asia Pacific we witness a new security partnership evolving between India and the U.S not only covering geo strategic interests but also addressing concerns to security environment attributed by drugs and arms trafficking, terrorism and insurgency which requires efforts beyond unilateral approach. Tellis (2005) remarks how India will be an important part of the American security strategy in Asia, "In those Asian areas of critical significance to vital US interests that would warrant the commitment of US resources, including force on a unilateral basis if necessary, India will indeed remain a peripheral actor. But as its capabilities grow, so will its influence, even if it is limited. And that influence can help advance shared bilateral interests if relations with New Delhi are adroitly managed." He further asserts that in areas of Asian geopolitics the established great powers have not stake or incentive to unilaterally to protect those and thereby emergent powers like India can swing the balance by supporting one or other coalitions. (Tellis, 2005) India's security perception gives utmost priority to its immediate neighbourhood which it has always preferred to deal on its own terms and doesn't want external powers to interfere or mediate on such matters. Thus, India's strategic thinking in relation to partnering with U.S on security issues mainly revolves around areas outside its immediate neighbourhood. In this outer circle, India's immediate goal is to protect its lifelines for trade, investment and energy, both from large strategic threats and from such dangers as terrorism and piracy (Schaffer, 2010 68).

The growing Chinese investments and involvements in the surrounding neighbouring states is also of concern to India. To tackle such expanded range of security concerns in its outer circle India wants to engage with United States. India hopes that its security partnership with United States will help it deal with security challenges outside the inner perimeter of South Asia, both politically and militarily (Schaffer, 2010:70). For India partnering with U.S in the region adds to its stature and will act as a deterrent to other regional players trying to utilize the strategic space. In

addition it wants access to full range of U.S technology and expertise which will in turn embolden India's presence in the long run. Thus, one could notice range of agreements, joint military exercises, dialogues whereby India is partnering with U.S to construct a security arrangement despite its deep rooted consideration of maintaining its preeminence in the region.

The growing concern about security environment in Asia and the need to integrate a robust security partnership between U.S and India can be traced in its occurrence over the consecutive Joint statements since 2000 and thereby structurally presented in Obama administrations rebalance to Asia Policy. Below are certain excerpts from Indo-U.S official statements from 2000 to 2009 to highlight how maintenance of security in Asia gaining the prominence as a common interest that necessitates both countries to upgrade their partnership.

“The two leaders also discussed the evolving security environment in Asia, recalling their common desire to work for stability in Asia and beyond. They agreed that the Asian Security Dialogue that the two countries have initiated will strengthen mutual understanding. The two countries reaffirmed their belief that tensions in South Asia can only be resolved by the nations of South Asia, and by peaceful means. India reiterated its commitment to enhancing cooperation, peace, and stability in the region. Both sides stressed the unacceptability of continued violence and bloodshed as a basis for solution of the problems of the region” (Clinton White House Archives, 2000)

However, in the changed backdrop of terrorist attack on U.S the Joint statement of the following year centered on the commitment on both sides to fight against terrorism. Counterterrorism was highlighted as the prominent initiative with the initiation of Joint working Groups from January, 2000 (Bush White House Archives, 2006).

The Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) launched in January, 2004 was agreed on the basis of expanded cooperation between India and the United States in three specific areas of civilian nuclear activities, civilian space program and high technology trade. It was stated that cooperation in these areas will not only deepen ties of commerce and friendship between the two nations but will increase stability in Asia and beyond.

The joint statement released in 2005 coincided with the completion of NSSP initiative and it was resolved by two leaders to take the relationship to global partnership. Further impetus was given to counter terrorism operations and the New Framework of Defense relationship as a basis for future cooperation, including in the field of defense technology (Ministry of External Affairs, 2005).

Counter- terrorism activities continued to be the core of security cooperation between India and the United States. In joint statement of 2006, they stressed that terrorism is a global scourge that must be fought and rooted out in every part of the world. They reaffirmed their commitment to the protection of the free flow of commerce and the safety of navigation in the Indian Ocean region. They agreed to the conclusion of maritime Cooperation Framework to enhance security.

The Indo- U.S security cooperation in the last leg of Bush administration was mainly dominated by counter terrorism cooperation, high technology trade and the Civil nuclear deal with scattered mention of maritime security and maintenance of democratic peace and stability in some parts of South Asia. Within weeks of the start of the Obama Presidency India was under a gruesome terrorist attack on 26<sup>th</sup> November, 2009. The immediate response and discussion was again centered around counter terrorism and ‘bringing the perpetrators to justice’ however the security cooperation soon attained a more structured and region specific approach. The initiation of the U.S India strategic dialogue marked the beginning of the structured approach to security cooperation. The strategic Dialogue was launched in 2009 as a part of the complex structure of Indo-U.S relationship encompassing wide range of bilateral, global and regional issues of shared interest and common concerns. The strategic partnership evolved to prioritize two specific areas of security cooperation- the Asia pacific and Afghanistan.

***The Asia policy of the Obama administration or more popularly known as the pivot to Asia***

Schaffer writes that neither Indian nor U.S security officials cite China as a motivation for their security relationship and China has featured remarkably little in the two countries’ strategic dialogue but it is undeniable that China and its future role in the region is the most crucial point that shapes the context of U.S India security

relations (Schaffer, 2010). China's emergence as an economic and military power has affected the systematic and regional dimensions for both U.S and India. Chinese economic robustness has been successful in presenting a peer competitor to U.S economic monopoly (Friedberg, 2018). The rise of China and its involvement in the regional level has also brought about new dynamics to be considered by dominant powers in the region like India. Despite avoiding formal acknowledgement such changes have made U.S and India devote in strengthening their security architecture and cooperation. The Obama administration's policy of 'rebalance to Asia' formally launched the shift of U.s strategic priority from Europe to Asia with 'India as the linchpin' but such understanding can be traced to discussions made by both at various previous occasions. Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh in his address to the Council of Foreign relations, 2009 stressed that, " India and the United States can work together with other countries in the region to create an open and inclusive regional architecture in Asia- Pacific region" (Council of Foreign Relations,2009). On similar lines President Obama iterated how they see India as a responsible power maintaining security and stability in the region, "India today is a rising and responsible global power. In Asia, Indian leadership is expanding prosperity and the security across the region. And the United States welcomes and encourages India's leadership role in helping to shape the rise of a stable, peaceful, and prosperous Asia" (Joint Press Conference, U.S Department of State, 2009).

The then Foreign Secretary, Nirupama Rao stressed in her address to the Aspen Institute, about the about India's approach to regional security amidst a rising China and how it perceives U.S cooperation in such initiatives, "China's demonstrable economic strength and its growing military capabilities are a matter of fact and we must incorporate such factors into our calculus of the emerging 21st century scenario in the Asia Pacific. This is where a mature and evolving dialogue between India and the United States will be of considerable relevance in clarifying approaches to the regional situation and the policy approaches of roles of our two countries in these new circumstances...The United States has a major presence in the region. We need to work together to evolve a balanced, open and inclusive framework"(Rao, ASPEN Institute 2010). The first Indo- U.S strategic Dialogue held in Washington, 2010 further announced the joint efforts on trying to attain an open and inclusive security framework in Asia, "Minister Krishna and Secretary Clinton reiterated their shared

goal of advancing security and stability across Asia, in particular, through the emergence of an open, balanced, and inclusive architecture of cooperation in the region. Secretary Clinton welcomed India's leadership role in helping to shape the rise of a stable, peaceful and prosperous Asia” (U.S Department of State, 2010).

Thus the launch of Pivot to Asia policy and outlining India as a crucial partner is culmination of strategic considerations on both sides over the years. The Asia-Pacific region has long been a strategic importance to United States; the Obama administration only uplifted it to a crucial strategic priority position and expanded its scope by including India and the Indian Ocean region. 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 extracting itself from the various conflicts in 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, (b) It was aimed at nurturing effective partnerships with selective partners to help take up the responsibility of maintaining the regional stability and give impetus to the various strategies of the policy (Obama White House Archives, 2015).

In 2011, State Secretary Hillary Clinton noted that the US must be “smart and systematic” when investing its time and resources. “One of the most important tasks of American statecraft over the next decade will therefore be to lock in a substantially increased investment—diplomatic, economic, strategic, and otherwise—in the Asia-Pacific region.” The “pivot” (later called the “rebalance”) to Asia involved deepening and strengthening alliance commitments with US treaty allies including Japan, South Korea, Australia and the Philippines, and building new partnerships with Southeast Asian states (Clinton, 2011). Under the latter, India assumed a central role, with the potential to develop into a key strategic ally. 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).

Thus, enhancing cooperation with other Asian states and assisting in comprehensive



rise of India are parts of the same policy. As Tellis asserts, “, augmenting India’s capabilities as part of building a larger Asian balance that favors American interests remains the best option for now... At the end of the day, the ultimate rationale for bolstering New Delhi is that it is Washington that stands to gain the most from any successful strategy of balancing China...Consequently, the burdens of abetting the expansion of countervailing Indian power and that of other Asian states to China must be treated as a necessary investment (among other complementary initiatives) in preserving American primacy for yet another long cycle in world politics” (Tellis, 2015).

India’s strategic priority has always been its immediate neighbourhood, the ability of maintaining a pivotal source of security and stability in the region has been the basis of its claim towards its role as a regional power.

However, its penchant for a major power status requires its integration beyond the immediate neighbourhood and it must be able to build its role as a stabilizing power in the surrounding strategic areas of Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean region especially when there is another contending power with larger resources aiming to integrate and expand its influence over the region. In such a situation cooperation with the superpower will help it to propel itself to closer political, economic, military integration with the region. Cooperation with the U.S definitely provides India opportunities to insert itself as an indispensable element of the new regional balance of power (Ladwig & Mukherjee, 2019). Though, cooperation with U.S over the region eases India’s integration but it always had a niche approach towards the Asian neighbours focused on economic integration, building strategic partnerships and strengthening maritime security cooperation with an overall goal of containing single power domination and uplifting a multipolar structure in Asia to be led by India.

The Asia pacific will remain a strategic interest to U.S in coming years as we can notice how President Obama’s Asia policy have been upheld and upgraded by the following Trump administration’s *the Asia Reassurance Initiative Act (ARIA)* and the Biden administration’s the securitization of aid to the region.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> For details on U.S Asia Pacific strategy of Trump administration and Biden Administration refer to <https://realityofaid.org/bidens-pivot-to-asia/>(<https://www.orfonline.org/research/from-pivot-to-asia-to-trumps-aria-what-drives-the-us-current-asia-policy-61556/>)

Identification of such a common strategic and security interest will definitely witness deepening cooperation between India and the United States but the desired objectives behind investing in the Asia Pacific region differs thereby, limiting the chance of a structured long term policy between them. They have common interest in maintaining an inclusive open security framework in Asia and restraining the rise of Chinese dominion over the region but the ultimate strategic imperative remains different. For U.S the ultimate imperative is to ensure the Asian balance of power remains conducive to maintain the preponderance of an U.S led security order and for that it requires to thwart the rise of a competing power with threatens to disrupt the same structure and it is investing and assisting other regional powers like India to maintain the balance. While for India, it definitely will like to maintain an inclusive security framework in Asia free from the overt Chinese influence but ultimately it favours the development of indigenous efforts to build a multipolar Asia specific structure with Indian leadership.

Below is an analysis of the Indo-U.S Joint statements aligned with U.S presidential or Indian Prime Ministerial visits from 2000-2016 to highlight certain thrust areas of engagement over the years.

**Table 1 An analysis of Indo-U.S Joint Statements, 2000-2016**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Visit</b>	<b>Thrust Area of engagement</b>	<b>Sequence of issues</b>	<b>Other Issues</b>
2000	President Clinton's visit	Building a closer, qualitative relationship based on democracy & pluralism.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Growth of global economy,</li> <li>2. Regional &amp; international security,</li> <li>3. Fight infectious diseases, non-proliferation &amp; disarmament.</li> </ol>	Nuclear crisis, sanctions on India, Clinton Administration's decision not to mediate between India & Pakistan
	P.M Vajpayee's Visit	Democratic bond & values	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Counter terrorism,</li> <li>2. limiting and elimination of nuclear weapons,</li> <li>3. economic relations</li> </ol>	Friends, partners and allies cherishing democratic values
2001	P.M Vajpayee's Visit	Fight against Terrorism	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Joint Cyber-terrorism,</li> <li>2. humanitarian aid to Afghanistan,</li> <li>3. Civilian Space Program</li> </ol>	Lifting of sanctions on India
2005	P.M Singh's Visit	The Global Partnership Agreement	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Civil Nuclear cooperation,</li> <li>2. CEO forum,</li> <li>3. Economic Dialogue</li> </ol>	Completion of NSSP India has right to apply for UNSC membership but U.S presently supporting Japan
2006	President Bush's	Help India become a major power	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Global vision for India,</li> <li>2. economic prosperity,</li> </ol>	Annual foreign policy dialogue, De-

Year	Visit	Thrust Area of engagement	Sequence of issues	Other Issues
	Visit		3. energy & global Security, 4. Deepening democracy & meeting Challenges	hyphenating India and Pakistan
2009	PM Singh's State Visit	Partnership for a better World	1. Advancing global security, 2. counter terrorism, 3. MOU for cooperation in energy security	Backdrop of Mumbai terror attacks, stability in Afghanistan
2010	President Obama's visit to India	India-U.S. partnership is crucial for global stability and prosperity in the 21st century.	1. Security and Prosperity in Asia & Indian Ocean Region, 2. stability in Afghanistan, 3. defense cooperation	Supporting India's bid for UNSC membership
2013	P.M Singh's visit	Defense Partnership	1. Defense, 2. regional security & stability, 3. secure Afghanistan	Strong India is good for U.S
2014	P.M Modi's visit	Investment & trade	1. Economy, 2. investment initiative, 3. civil nuclear agreement, 4. climate fellowship	U.S as a principal partner in realization of India's rise
2015	President Obama's visit	Defense framework & nuclear agreement	1. Defense integration, aligning regional security, 2. economy	Highlighted India's ideal of religious tolerance
2016	P.M Modi visit	India as major defense partner	1. Asia Pacific Cooperation, 2. climate change	Elevating ties short of a formal alliance

Source: <https://www.state.gov/u-s-department-of-state-archive-websites/>

### 4.3.3 An analysis of Indo-U.S Joint Statements, 2000-2016

The table prepared shows an analysis of the Indo U.S Joint Statements (2000-2016) based on thrust area of engagement, how issue areas have been sequenced in the joint statement documents and other issues that have been mentioned. The thrust area during the Clinton Presidency harped on initiating a qualitative relationship based on democratic values with economic relations as the first sequence of issues and the decision to not mediate between India and Pakistan. With United States' policy of global war on terror the thrust area of Indo U.S relations in 2001 turned to fight against terrorism with Afghanistan featuring prominently in sequence of issue areas and capacity building agreements were given a boost. By 2005, the drive was to initiate a wide scale global partnership with thrust on core issues like civil nuclear cooperation, CEO forum and completion of next step in strategic partnership (NSSP). One thing that deserves mention here is that despite elevating the relations into a

global partnership the United States evaded from supporting India's bid for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council and chose to support Japan. In lieu of the diverse agreements to assist India's capacity building, the joint statement of 2006 saw U.S acknowledgement of India's potential as a global power. Economic cooperation again appeared in the first of sequence in issue areas with the prominent stress on Indo U.S cooperation in maintaining global Security. Democratic ties as a cornerstone of mutual understanding made a comeback in the joint statement since the Clinton administration. The decision of the Clinton administration to not mediate in India Pakistan relations was formalized by a policy of de-hyphenation by the Bush administration in the joint statement of 2006. In 2009, a clear prioritization was given to global security and energy security with renewed cooperation in maintaining stability in Afghanistan. The joint statements of 2010 and 2013 had security and prosperity in Asia and Indian Ocean region as the thrust area aligning with the US policy of rebalancing to Asia and India's prominent role in it. In 2010, deviating from the Bush administration, President Obama supported India's bid for permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. Securing a viable future for Afghanistan by deepening Cooperation between India and the United States also appeared on a significant basis in the sequence of issue areas. Thus, regional and global stability and security was one of the central aspects of the joint statements of 2010 and 2013 with the prominent thrust on defense cooperation. With a BJP led Indian government in power. The thrust area was shifted to investment and trade in 2014 with economy and civil nuclear agreement mentioned primarily in sequence of issue areas. Defense partnership became the thrust area for the consecutive joint statements of 2015 and 2016. The sequence of issue areas so how regional security and stability have been connected with the deepening of defense cooperation between the two States .By 2016 with the United States addressing India as a major defense partner the Indo U.S relation was being solidified to a more integrated constructive partnership over global and regional security maintenance tied with defense cooperation.

Maintaining regional security and stability with deepening defense and economic ties appear to be the most significant thrust areas of Indo U.S relation. Based on the analysis the next two areas of engagement have been considered, strategic cooperation over stability in Afghanistan and an upgrading defense cooperation to study how India

and the United States are identifying areas to cooperate and even when the difference over vision or approaches appear how they are continuing the engagement to forward common strategic interest.

#### **4.3.4 The strategic cooperation in Afghanistan**

Another strategic area that saw U.S and India cooperating to prevent strategic uncertainties has been Afghanistan. Both U.S and India conjoined to contribute for rehabilitation and reconstruction together with the common goal of securing stable democratic governance in Afghanistan.

American involvement in Afghanistan was motivated by its reaction to fight terrorism in the aftermath of 9/11 terrorist attacks on U.S. it became a sudden policy priority for the Bush administration as a part of his larger War on Terror with the twin aim of destroying Al-Qaeda and assisting in the state building process in Afghanistan. The rebuilding process was bound to be more time consuming, complicated and expensive and soon the aid and support from multilateral cooperation were rendered insufficient which forced the administration to double the funding, increase American troop presence and expanded American intelligence efforts. By the end of the term the Bush administration was convinced that reconstruction in Afghanistan is incomprehensible and unattainable and a burden on American financial reserves. The Obama administration came to power with promise to renew efforts to reduce American troop presence and initiate the process of conditions based transfer of authority to Afghan government thereby limiting the involvement of U.S to providing development and economic assistance, plus training for military and civilian personnel. The Af-Pak strategy was outlined as a singular approach to deal with two countries with one challenge. The reason Pakistan is bracketed with Afghanistan is because its tribal areas alongside the Afghanistan border are perceived by the Obama administration to be a safe haven for Al-Qaeda and its terrorist allies, fueling Afghan insurgency and threatening to increase international terrorism. (Ahmed, 2010:194)

It can be duly observed that the Obama administration's new policy on Afghanistan highlighted the tendency of limiting American involvement in reconstruction process, providing access to local forces to construct the Afghan government

and promoting regional efforts from neighbouring countries to maintain peace and stability. The succeeding administrations also focused on devising strategies that could hasten the withdrawal process. Thus, Afghanistan was never considered a long term strategic interest for the United States rather a crisis oriented involvement that soon became burdensome as immediate strategic concerns changed. It can be duly assumed that with change in American strategic priorities and threat perception, the policy towards Afghanistan was to hasten the process withdrawal but to support the peace process and to continue with developmental aid. On American priorities, Michael Kugelman, deputy director of the South Asia Program in Woodrow Wilson Center, explains these in light of the US' strategic and security urgency. Kugelman says, The US has bigger priorities elsewhere. Washington, at least in the near term, will continue to push for an Afghan peace process, and it will keep pursuing its counterterrorism interests in Afghanistan, albeit from far...But the Biden administration has made a decision that it has bigger strategic fish to fry in other parts of the world—in Europe, the Middle East, and elsewhere in Asia, including South Asia.” (Pandey, The Sunday Guardian, 2021).

For India the South Asian region has always been its strategic priority and Afghanistan falls within the very region. Thus, India's involvement in Afghanistan cannot be as flexible and incremental as it is the case for U.S. India and Afghanistan have shared historical and cultural links and post 2001 India undertook an active role in reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan as a long term sustainable policy. The Indian policy towards Afghanistan was based on the understanding that investing and assisting in building indigenous Afghan capacity will in turn result in social and economic development of Afghanistan which will ensure larger regional stability (Ministry of External Affairs, 2012).

India adopted a soft power approach by concentrating on four broad areas of development, infrastructural projects, humanitarian assistance, small and community based developmental projects and education and capacity development. It is the objective of building a stable, sovereign, democratic Afghanistan that India and the U.S identified with each other and time and again they have reiterated their shared interest over Afghanistan. They stressed on capacity building and development and have applauded common efforts. “On the regional situation, we appreciate the

commitment of the United States to the stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan, to emphasize the need to grow Afghan capacity to deal with the problems in that country, to intensify efforts to eradicate terrorism” (Nirupama Rao, 2012).

Their goal of building a stable democratic Afghanistan though crucial but was devoid of a long term strategy as their core objectives over long run differed from each other. While U.S policies was motivated to introduce offshore involvement than its direct involvement and finally to withdraw, the Indian policy had to be motivated by an enduring involvement as stability in Afghanistan is related to its core security strategy. For U.S Afghanistan shifted from being a strategic priority with shift of threat perception and being thousand miles away from the region it was becoming a bad investment but India’s present and future involvement in Afghanistan is strategically linked to its plan to expand its influence over Central Asia and a viable opportunity to cast its impact beyond the South Asian region. Terrorism emanating from Afghan soil with time became redundant as the major threat perception for U.S and it focused more on a rising threat of a credible competitor in Asia. With U.S withdrawal and the return of Taliban in Afghanistan made it more threatful for India as the revival of resurgent Islamism with their close proximity with Pakistan can become a serious security concern for India.

A distinct line of dissonance appeared on the Indian side regarding the withdrawal of all U.S troops from Afghanistan leaving a void that soon fell in the hands of Taliban forces. India’s external affair’s minister S. Jaishankar remarked “while India’s interest with U.S converge with

U.S in the East, there are divergences in the West, particularly Afghanistan...”<sup>21</sup> The withdrawal of the International Security Assistance Force from Afghanistan was perceived by India as a step that duly hampered the decade long involvement to establish a democratic stable civil society. Commenting on the Raisina dialogue, Indian External affairs minister S. Jaishankar remarked, “You spoke about Ukraine. I remember, less than a year ago, what happened in Afghanistan, where an entire

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<sup>21</sup> For India’s view on American withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan "India Has Divergences with US on Afghanistan: EAM S Jaishankar," The Times Of India, August 16, 2021, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/indiahas-divergences-with-us-on-afghanistan-eamsjaishankar/articleshow/85356796.cms>.

civil society was thrown under the bus by the world.”<sup>22</sup> He highlighted how the international community shirked away as Afghanistan again slipped into the hands of regressive militant rule after two decades vigorous tryst to establish a free, enabling civil society.

While the disgruntlement over Afghanistan was quite prominent some scholars saw the U.S withdrawal having positive effects on Indo-U.S relations. C. Rajamohan (2010) in his piece in *Foreign policy* asserts that U.S withdrawal from Afghanistan will reduce Pakistan’s prominence in U.S strategic considerations and will enable deeper ties with India. Further U.S has withdrawn from Afghanistan to focus on the new challenges from rising China in Indo-Pacific which should enhance opportunity for India to cooperate with U.S as it sees China as a greater threat than Pakistan.

However, a narrow Islamist force in power in India’s neighbourhood cannot be ignored as a lesser strategic threat. India don’t have the luxury to follow an offshore strategy in Afghanistan as cooperating with hardline Taliban forces will be a challenge that needs to be addressed if stability and India’s interest in the region needs to be realized.

#### **4.3.5 Defense cooperation and Logistics Agreement issue**

Defense relation between India and the U.S has developed enormously over the years since the signing of the ‘New Framework for India-U.S. Defense Relations’ in 2005. It was followed by intensification in defense trade, joint exercises, personnel exchanges, collaboration and cooperation in maritime security and counter-piracy, and exchanges between each of the three services. The Defense Framework Agreement was updated and renewed for another 10 years in June 2015. There has been significant increase in bilateral exercises and bilateral dialogue mechanisms. Joint exercises and operations have steadily grown with the ‘Malabar series’ of naval exercises in Indian Ocean, India’s participation in the RIMPAC exercises and their cooperation towards humanitarian missions is noteworthy. India and the United States have launched a Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) aimed at

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<sup>22</sup> A debate arose on India’s reaction to Russia Ukraine conflict at the Raisina Dialogue, for details see <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/you-speak-about-ukraine-i-remember-what-happened-in-afghanistan- eam-jaishankars-dig-at-west-1104146.html>



simplifying technology transfer policies and exploring possibilities of co-development and co-production to invest the defense relationship with strategic value.

During the visit of Prime Minister to the U.S. in June 2016, the U.S. recognized India as a "Major Defense Partner", which commits the U.S. to facilitate technology sharing with India to a level commensurate with that of its closest allies and partners, and industry collaboration for defense co-production and co-development.

They tend to differ over the very understanding of having a strategic defense cooperation. U.S sees a broader security relation as a combining structure of defense cooperation with military supply, which thereby binds institutional relations and interoperability. Such a binding structure helps in creating linkages through training and joint activities. India tends to look as defense trade as a supply question separate from institutional relations and training. For India, U.S willingness to supply high technology is an important indicator of India being a valuable partner but again it does not want to install an all in all U.S supplied integrated system to reduce dependence on a single source.

The study will cite their negotiations to bridge through the distinct concerns regarding the logistics agreement while agreeing on the benefits of having such an agreement in place. They have engaged heavily in defense cooperation, joint military exercises involving all military branches, military training and unit exchanges over the years but when it came to agreeing on the terms on of the logistics agreement we saw how they negotiated to find a distinct altered version to satisfy both ends. U.S has no template for a close defense relationship outside the obligations inherent in a formal alliance structure which necessitates signing of the foundational agreements (Ayres, 2017). U.S hopes to achieve both operational and strategic goals through its expanded security relationship with India. It is looking for interoperability through common operating experience. (Schaffer, 2010) For India a large-scale domestic opposition to signing of LEMOA was witnessed based on the perception that signing such an agreement will make India equivalent with U.S allies and will drag India into America's conflicts and policies, especially in West Asia and East Asia.(Rajagopalan,2017) While understanding the benefits of having a logistics agreement with U.S, India was cautious over making extensive commitments in line of formal alliance and over-ride its cherished ideal of maintaining autonomy.

The LEMOA signed in 2016 highlighted how an India specific version of the original Logistics Support Agreement (LSA) was put to effect to address the concerns of both sides. While U.S signs three agreements — Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA) are referred to as the foundational agreements with countries with which it has close military ties and wanted to extend the same to India but the Indian side raised concern regarding issues of national security and being entangled in American security structure. LEMOA was signed which permits the US and India to use each other's facilities and provides for easier access to supplies and services for the military forces of the two countries when they are engaged in specific types of activities. The agreement primarily covers four areas port cooperation, joint exercises, training and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Any other requirement has to be agreed upon by both sides on a case-by- case basis. LEMOA is much more flexible and limited in scope than LSA but it satisfied the U.S interest of having a logistics agreement in place and also addressed India's concern of entering into a formal binding agreement related to security (What is LEMOA-The Hindu, 2016). On similar lines The LEMOA was followed by the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), which was signed on 6 September 2018 being a tweaked version of the original the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA). This was only an instance to show how their difference in strategic thinking informs their terms of engagement. Even when an area of convergence has been identified there needs to be committed efforts to tide over the difference in viewpoint and reaching a middle ground. What means routine or procedural for U.S, India tends to view such provisions as binding commitment.

#### **4.4 Nuances of Engagement**

The difference in relative power between U.S and India will continue and so will be their perspectives over the nuances of engagement. As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, for United States when it engages with a regional power like India it does so to achieve strategic goals in that particular region and thereby invests in positive inducements, diplomatic recognition to influence India's foreign policy behavior to align with its own interests. India while recognizing the continuing predominance of

U.S in the international system and the benefits it can accrue being in partnership with U.S it has to map out the larger consideration of being recognized as major power on its own terms and being able to pursue indigenous interests within a more adoptive and emancipatory international structure. U.S has always preferred working through U.S structured alliance system or partnerships with defined aims, provisions and procedures while India has always been cautious of entering into much defined monolithic structure and have sought to work with multiple options to retain its flexibility. The vivid difference in the understanding of engagement or partnership between both makes it quite interesting to observe how they operate being strategic partners. The difference does not only confine to parameters and procedures of engagement but also informed by the difference over strategic thinking on both sides as discussed in the previous chapters. There is no denying the fact that their strategic partnership has developed in nature and scope indicating that they have outlined some understanding to achieve what Ashley Tellis rightly remarked as “Unity in difference” (Tellis, 2015:34). There seems to be an understanding in U.S that engaging with India will never be on the same premises it has with other partners and it have to coopt with India’s needs to work within flexible, independent environment. While India also realizes that it has to amass the dividends of being in close partnership with U.S and should accommodate when necessary to provide incentives to U.S to continue its preferential policies towards India. The strategic partnership will therefore remain motivated by working continuously on already identified common interests and on the quest of identifying new avenues of cooperation while assuming that long term objectives or policies will not align in most cases. The fact that long term strategic objectives will differ will avert them from reaching optimal heights of partnership or alliance. But that would not stall the current cooperation as the present situation requires India and the United States to work closely. It is Washington’s prerogative to assist and bolster Indian power to build a larger Asian balance that favours American interest. For India with the rise of Chinese dominance it is most pertinent to be in a partnership with U.S that not only brings U.S resources and support but also makes it integration in the Asian structure facile (Tellis, 2015).

Weighing the global and regional situations they both understood the necessity of maintaining cooperation and have devised ways to fit into each-others prerogatives and reach collaborative efforts despite particular constraints.

- The larger question remains that in a partnership when both sides have an assumption that their long term strategic objectives will not align in most cases, can such a partnership have a prominent future?

The ultimate objective of United States for Indo – U.S relations will always be concerned about how it assists in preserving the American primacy. For India the motivation is to remain in a beneficial relation with the dominant power to accrue material resources and international status to become a major power on its own terms. Thus, the United States assisting the rise of India might serve its present aim of solidifying a larger balance against a prospective rival and to secure the advent of Indian power by coopting it within the American preferred structures. The emergence of India is not considered threatful for U.S at the present but it must be remembered that the foundational policy is to prevent rise of any peer competitor to preserve U.S supremacy. Under such scenario it remains wise for India to consider that firstly, the preference it is getting from U.S to play a larger role in the Asian balance might be taken up by some other Asian power like Japan which might be more willing to comply to U.S norms and provisions and secondly, if it so occurs the U.S devises a more constructive engagement strategy with China itself to coax it into toning down its assertiveness and be more compliant to U.S interests it will limit its investment to India and thirdly, when India's ascent into a major power will not be in conformity to U.S interests and will be considered a challenge to U.S primacy then the countervailing strategy now applied to Chinese ascension might also be formulated to restrict India in the future. Thus, taking into consideration all these factors the next chapter will try to focus on the various modes of interaction that can be adopted by U.S and India to engage with eachother having two contradictory aspect of maintaining a growing strategic partnership that is serves both sides well and also understanding that their strategic worldview will continue to differ in the long run. For United States modes of interaction with a regional power will be quite simple as it has the resources and the influence to induce preferred engagements but again under changing power equations to constantly be able to ensure such viability will be difficult. The regional power like India on the hand must devise multiple strategies of interaction if it wants to achieve great power status with niche characteristics and recognition.

## 4.5 Chapter Brief

This chapter highlighted how the very idea of engagement differs when applied by a superpower and when utilized by a lesser power. For the superpower engagement refers to the use of non-punitive measures to coax or modify the behavior or objective of a state that seems to challenge the superpower's interests or preferred norms. While for a lesser power, engagements are means to construct meaningful relations not only with major powers but also smaller powers at regional or global structures to ultimately enhance its influence and capacity. Power variance casts a dominant effect on how engagement is perceived. While positing U.S and India within such parameters to understand the way they identify areas of common interest to cooperate must consider that despite cooperation their understanding of engagement will differ significantly. Thus, as per U.S foreign policy engagement is aimed at modifying non-confirmative elements of a secondary power by incentives or status recognition. For India, engagement is dealt as a multipronged strategy aimed at building constructive bilateral and multilateral relations that helps to further its influence and support its desire for a major power status. The power asymmetry together with their sense of entitlement informs their difference in understanding engagement. Their quest to identify areas of common interest thereby highlights the significance of underlying engagement strategies that weaves through such differences and ensures cooperation. The four issues areas chosen marks a global issue of proliferation, strategic imperative over Afghanistan, security, strategy and order maintenance in Indo-Pacific and defense cooperation. An analysis into the four issue areas underline inherent differences in terms of specific interests in common spheres, idea of evolving regional order and international system, approaches to agreements and mode of operations and most importantly over long term strategic objectives.