

U.S-India Security Relations Implications for China

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Remarkable changes have taken place in the framework of US-India security relations in recent years. During the Cold War, estrangement characterized the two democracies because of India's non-aligned policy, close relations with the erstwhile Soviet Union and tensions with Pakistan, coupled with the US containment policy towards the Soviet Union, and the US alliance with Pakistan. Based on common strategic, economic and political interests after the end of the Cold War, the US and India have moved from being "estranged democracies"¹ to "engaged democracies". Such a change is primarily due to America's adjustment of its strategy and policy toward India as well as South Asia and the Asia-Pacific. The changing US-Indian security relations will have a great impact on China's security environment. This paper focuses on the implications of these

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¹ Dennis Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies, 1941-1991*, Washington, D. C.: National Defense University Press, 1993.

changes for China from three perspectives: the emergence of a Sino-US-India strategic triangle; the complicated security situation in South Asia; and the America factor in Sino-India relations.

The increasing attention being paid to the relationship between the Indian and the US security apparatus – particularly over the last couple of years – is no longer a matter that can be dismissed as mere speculation. Indeed, after India's five underground nuclear tests at Pokhran in May 1998, the US initiated a series of strict sanctions under the aegis of the US Nuclear Proliferation Prevention Act of 1994. The security relationship between Washington and New Delhi had ebbed and suspicion seemed to characterize the bilateral agenda.

President Clinton's visit to India in March 2000, which was the fourth presidential visit in the history of the two countries and the first in the last 22 years, was a turning point in the ambivalent US-India relations of yesteryears. On May 1, 2001, not long after he took office, President George W. Bush made a speech to announce his security policy and plans for developing a missile defence system² India had expressed its approval of this programme earlier, and was, indeed, seen to be even more supportive than the US' traditional allies. Later, in order to win India's support in the fight against terrorism, the US lifted its sanctions on India and the two nations agreed to comprehensively co-operate in the field of the global war against terrorism.³ Indeed, in May 2002, US Special Forces were flown into India and took part in a two-week military manoeuvre in north India, in the historical city of Agra. This manoeuvre was the first between the two countries in 39 years and demonstrated that their military cooperation had reached a high level.⁴

² See "Bush tears up missile treaty", www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?xml=/news/2001/05/02/wbush02.xml

³ In a memorandum to the Secretary of State from Camp David, the U.S. President, George W. Bush, said the continuation of the punitive measures "would not be in the national security interests of the United States." See "U.S. lifts sanctions against India, Pak", *The Hindu*, Chennai, September 24, 2001.

⁴ Combined air-ground exercises were held in Agra in May and in Alaska in September-October 2002. Further, air transport exercise was conducted in Agra in October 2002. For details see, "Military Exercises: Waltzing with

What are the changes in US-India relationship? Why are these changes occurring? What are the implications of these changes for China's security, and how will these affect Sino-India relationships and Sino-US relationships? This paper attempts to examine these questions.

US-India Relations: From Estrangement to Rapprochement

With the beginning of the Cold War, the primary US goal with regard to countries in South Asia was “to orient those nations toward the United States and the other Western democracies and away from the Soviet Union.”⁵ However, India's geo-strategic interests and considerations were different from those of the US.

As opposed to Pakistan, who joined the US led BTO (Baghdad Treaty Organization, later the Central Treaty Organization, CENTO) and SEATO (the South East Asia Treaty Organization), India initially supported the principles of self-government and non-alignment – resulting in its refusal to participate in the US-led strategic alliance against the Soviet Union.

India was also opposed to the setting up of a defensive alliance in order to contain China. It recognized the new Communist-led government of China in December 1949, regarded Taiwan as a part of China, and criticized the US for its official stance against the People's Republic. In January 1951, India was the only non-Communist state that voted against a resolution sponsored by the United States in the United Nations (UN) General Assembly labelling China as an aggressor.⁶

As a third corollary, India began to receive military, political, and economic assistance from the erstwhile Soviet Union from

arms”, *The Week*, Kochi, November 10, 2002. Also available at www.the-week.com/22nov10/events2.htm.

⁵ Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan, 1947-1965*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1994, p. 17.

⁶ M. Srinivas Chary, *The Eagle and the Peacock: U.S. Foreign Policy Toward India Since Independence*, Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1995, pp. 74-84.

the 1960's – an alliance which brought about further estrangement in Indo-US relations. Indeed, India still depended on Moscow for military and political support, and when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 – which made the US and China stand by Pakistan's side – India complained that the US did not try to find a political method to resolve the Afghanistan crisis. On the other hand, US did not punish India for its close relationship with Soviet Union in the 1980's.

The other important factor was the India-Pakistan War of 1971. The US sent its Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal and this act was regarded as a threat by India and it pushed the already ebbing Indo-US relationship to an all-time low. By supporting Pakistan, New Delhi argued that America had forced India into an unnecessary and costly arms race, that American assistance gave Pakistan the means and the inspiration to challenge New Delhi, and that the Pakistan-US relationship came to be seen as not directed against communism, but against India.⁷

During the Cold War, America's policy toward India was different from its policy toward the two other big Asian nations – China and Japan. America did not include India as its strategic alliance partner nor did it include India as a possible containment target. And just as the United States did not approve of India attempting to balance power between United States and the Soviet Union, India did not endorse the United States' attempt to balance power between India and Pakistan. In sum, with India implementing the policy of non-alignment, maintaining friendly relations with the Soviet Union, and engaging Pakistan; and, the contrasting United States' policy of forming alliances in order to deter the Soviet Union, made it difficult for the US and India to work together.

With the end of the Cold War, myriad factors began to push the United States and India to change their relationship from estrangement to one of convergence. The United States and India are two of the largest democracies in the world and, furthermore, they have similar egalitarian values. The US also hopes that India will play an active role in the process of democratisation in

⁷ Stephen P. Cohen, *India and America: An Emerging Relationship*, A paper presented at the Conference on "The Nation-State System and Transnational Forces in South Asia", December 8-10, 2000, Kyoto, Japan.

Russia. Starting from the 1990s, with India beginning to implement policies to create an open market economy, the United States has been treating India as a newly developed market; United States has progressively emerged as India's greatest source for foreign investment supplies and trading partner. Up to 1998, it seemed that the two countries attempted to form a new relationship that would bring them closer and engender a more robust co-operative relationship. Even though this relationship was damaged in 1998, when India exploded its nuclear bombs and the Americans responding with an embargo, the relationship that had taken off after the Cold War had not ended. Indeed, with eight rounds of security dialogue between US Deputy Secretary of State, Strobe Talbot, and the then Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, the security relationship between the two countries normalised.

During the Kargil crisis of 1999, India successfully won sympathy and support from the US. In stark contrast, the US initially cold-shouldered Pakistan's new regime when General Pervez Musharraf rode to power through a military coup. The two situations in 1999 led United States' South Asian policy shift to 'focusing on India and reducing on Pakistan.'

President Clinton's India visit was the first turning point in the Indo-US security relationship. During his visit, President Clinton admitted that the US had ignored India over the preceding 20 years and indicated that it would end the passive impact caused by nuclear issues in future.⁸ In a joint communiqué which was termed 'India-US relations: A Vision for the 21st Century', the Indo-US relationship was termed a 'continuous, constructive in political area, and beneficial in economic arena' style of new partnership.⁹ This new style of partnership, according to certain independent analyses, was formed on the basis of both the sides

⁸ Opening statement by President Clinton in the Joint Press Conference held in Delhi, March 21, 2000.

⁹ India-U.S. Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century. For full text of the communiqué, see www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/clinton_india/joint_india_us_statement_mar_21_2000.htm.

deriving mutual strategic benefits, economic benefits, and socio-political benefits.¹⁰

President George W. Bush continued the policy after he took office. When the then Indian Foreign Minister, Jaswant Singh, visited Washington in April 2001, Bush told him that the new administration would continue and strengthen its predecessor's policy to promote bilateral relations. After Bush declared his new Missile Defence plan on May 1, 2001, Condoleeza Rice, then Special Assistant to the President on National Security Affairs, broke protocol and took an initiative to call Singh and introduce the U.S. missile defense policy to him; US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage, also visited India in order to muster support. This is the first time that the US has valued India as an important partner in its strategic agenda.

The September 11, 2001, attack and the war on terrorism that followed provided a chance for the US and India to forge an even closer strategic cooperation. It has become a turning point in the Indo-US security relationship. The two countries together implemented a co-operative framework of relationships based on three dimensions: democracy, economy, and security. In the security field, the United States felt that India, as a de-facto nuclear state, had co-operative potential with the US on the proliferation issue. India actively supported the US missile defence plan as well as that on counter-terrorism. With the end of the US sanctions on India¹¹, the two countries improved and increased high level leadership communications, military contact, and economic co-operation. On November 9, 2001, President Bush told the visiting Indian Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, that his administration was committed towards developing a fundamentally different relationship with India, based upon both trust and mutual values.¹² After the meeting of

¹⁰ Kanti Bajpai, "India-US Foreign Policy Concerns: Cooperation and Conflict" in Gary K. Bertsch, Seema Gahlaut, and Anupam Srivastava, eds., *Engaging India: US Strategic Relations with the World's Largest Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 194.

¹¹ See President Waives Sanctions on India, Pakistan, September 22, 2001, www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010922-4.html.

¹² Remarks by the U.S. President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee at the White House, Washington, DC, November 9, 2001, www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/2001/vajpayee_bush_nov_9_01.htm.

the two top leaders, in a joint statement signed by both the countries, expressed their desire to enhance bilateral co-operation in the war against terrorism, and agreed to renew the activities of the Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism. The Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was established in January 2000 as a first step towards increasing exchange and technology co-operation in the field of defense and security.¹³ Thereafter, the two countries maintained a high-level contact frequently and formulated a comprehensive co-operative agenda. Mohammed Ayoob believes that the United States and India can begin close co-operation in the following security arenas: (1) improve the region's security and stability; (2) counter terrorism; (3) promote democracy; (4) prevent nuclear proliferation, and (5) contain China during the first 10 years of the new century.¹⁴ As Stephen Cohen, the celebrated US specialist on South Asia security issues has commented, the United States and India's relationship was 'structurally changing'.¹⁵

However, the partnership between the United States and India has not developed into a possibility of creating an alliance similar to that of the US-Japan or US-UK Alliance. The reasons are as follows:

First, India's five nuclear tests in 1998 greatly damaged the US-led international non-proliferation regime. Though the United States has adjusted its non-proliferation policy to some measure after Bush's taking office, India's nuclear tests and the United State's embargo afterward continue to have some negative effects on the Indo-US relationship. After 9/11, the US pressure on India to join the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) has lessened, although it is still to disappear. This has been perceived as a bargaining chip for the co-operation the United States seeks from India in its fight against terrorism.

¹³ Joint Statement Between the United States of America and the Republic of India, November 9, 2001,
www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/11/20011109-10.html

¹⁴ Mohammed Ayoob, "India Matters", *The Washington Quarterly*, Cambridge, MA, Winter 2000, vol. 23, no. 1, p. 29.

¹⁵ Cohen, "India and America: An Emerging Relationship".

Secondly, America realized that India and South Asia is the “most dangerous region in the world”. In considering facts such as territorial disputes, the ethnic and religious divergence, and the nuclear confrontation between India and Pakistan; the need for Pakistan to support the United States in its counter-terrorism campaign; and South Asian and American relationships with other major countries in the region, the United States will not create an alliance in the region with any third country. Creating such an alliance to counter a third party does not benefit US interests.

Thirdly, Americans and Indians have very different views of a just international order. These differences have led to specific Indian-American disagreements in three important areas: the limits of humanitarian peacekeeping; the make-up of the UN Security Council; and the emergence of China.¹⁶ Most Indians have trouble accepting the principle of humanitarian interventions and fear that the US would extend the principle to South Asia – which means the United States would support the principle of ‘self-determination’ and press for a plebiscite in Kashmir. Similarly, the United States is unwilling to accept the Indian demand for a UN Security Council seat. Some Americans would regard it as a ‘reward’ for India’s nuclear programme, and fear that this would further accelerate the trend towards nuclear weapons.

Finally, India and the United States are each groping for a strategy to cope with the emergence of China as a major world power.¹⁷ The United States is especially concerned about China’s challenge to its world leadership, while India is especially concerned about China’s future relationship with Pakistan. For India, creating or joining an alliance against China does not suit its national interests. One Chinese scholar pointed out that if India does not participate in the containment of China, China’s development would lighten US strategic pressure on India. If India joins forces with the United States to contain China, the

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

future of the 21st century will not belong to India.¹⁸ An Indian scholar argued that, as a developing country, India's priority is economic development. India has always attached the highest value to maintaining independence in making her foreign policy and sovereignty and avoided becoming part of an US or western agenda towards China. The United States is also unlikely to be willing to underwrite the costs of guaranteeing Indian security, and it would be foolish for India to entrust her security to a superpower with global interests. Furthermore, The United States and India both have substantive interests in China. Both within the United States and India, there are significant numbers of people that believe that China is a 'threat' to the interests of the two countries. Both countries also have people that advocate close engagement.¹⁹

United States' South Asia Policy: Beyond Balance of Power

United States and India's relationship has changed in these various ways because the US has adjusted its strategy and policy in South Asia. The adjustment is demonstrated in the following areas:

A change in the United States security policy towards India

In terms of non-proliferation, the US urges India not to carry out nuclear tests, not to produce fissile materials, not to deploy missiles with nuclear warheads, to stop a dangerous nuclear and missile arms race and to control the export of sensitive materials. As anti-terrorism become the United States' greatest concern, it has reduced the pressure on India in the area of halting the spread of nuclear arms. In terms of Kashmir, there is a change from supporting Pakistan's policy which is implementing United

¹⁸ Zhang Wenmu, "Global Geopolitics and India's Future Security", *Zhan Lue Yu Guan Li Strategy and Management*, June 2001, pp.43-52. Author's own translation.

¹⁹ Venu Rajamony, *India-China-U.S. Triangle: A 'Soft' Balance of Power System in the Making*, Center for Strategic and International Studies Report, Washington, D.C., March 2002, p. 40. See www.csis.org/saprog/venu.pdf.

Nations policy of giving the residents of Kashmir the right of plebiscite for its future to supporting India's policy of solving the problem through negotiation while respecting Kashmir residents' view. In terms of its relations with India and with Pakistan, the United States, in accordance with its own advantage, and comparing the power of different nations in South Asia, has slowly changed its focus to India.

An article published in *Washington Times*, quoting the Executive Director of US–India Commercial Committee, Michael Clark, stated that, for an American company, the most important thing was not the rising of the Indian middle class, but undoubtedly the information technology corporations in India, which have extraordinary potential.²⁰ Some scholars in China concluded that the US policy toward India had changed from 'paying equal attention to India and Pakistan' in the early period of the post-Cold War era to 'focusing on India and reducing Pakistan' during the Clinton administration. The focus was once again changed to 'raising India and curbing Pakistan' when Bush took over and 'regarding Pakistan while respecting India' after the 9/11 attacks and the Enduring Freedom campaign in Afghanistan.²¹

United States changed its security policy towards South Asia from balance of power to power advantage

The advantage is demonstrated in the following manner: (1) US obtains more influence in South Asia, compared to Russia and China; and (2) India wins the dominant position in the Indian sub-continent, compared to the other South Asian countries. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the eminent American strategist, recognized India as "the strongest state in South Asia and to some extent the regional hegemon." But at the same time, he thought that, "as a geo-strategic player, India is not – at least, not to the same degree as

²⁰ Jasmin Fischer, "After Cold War, India, U.S. find common ground", *The Washington Times*, August 7, 1999.

²¹ Ma Jiali, "The Adjustment of U.S. Policy toward South Asia after Sept 11" *Nan Ya Yan Jiou (South Asia Study)* vol. 2, 2001; Jiang Yili, "Why does Pakistan–U.S. Relationship get more estrangements" *Dong Dai Ya Tai (Contemporary Asia Pacific)*, vol. 10, 2001. Author's own translation.

either Russia or China – a source of geopolitical concern.”²² However, this kind of judgment undervalues India’s position and capability. The US recognizes India as the largest democracy in the world. India’s economy increased by six per cent annually in the 1990’s and it also has a growing information technology industry. The United States is India’s largest trading partner, its biggest investor and its biggest provider of advanced technology.²³ Besides, Indian Americans are playing an important role in shaping the United States’ South Asia policy.²⁴ During his trip to South Asia in March 2000, President Clinton visited India for seven days while halting symbolically in Pakistan only for some hours. It is obvious that U.S. places its relationship with India on the top of its South Asia policy framework. Compared with Pakistan, which experiences economical trouble and political turbulence and has only one-seventh of India’s territory, Washington regards New Delhi as the largest democracy and a potentially important economic partner. Nevertheless, the United States is unlikely to discard its Cold War ally – Pakistan. Contrarily, the United States needs Pakistani support and co-operation as an Islamic ‘frontline state’ in the war against terrorism.

In sum, against the backdrop of the its preferential values in favour of democracy and its long-term benefits, and the comparison of power between different countries in South Asia, the United States changed its strategic policy of focusing on the balance of power during the Cold War to define and implement a new policy in South Asia: ‘Focusing on India and Reducing on Pakistan.’ This new policy attempted to go beyond the balance of power. However, judgments based on past traditions, concerns regarding the anti-terrorism efforts and the dangerous situation in South Asia, have diluted this perspective to one within which there is a ‘focus on India while respecting Pakistan.’ Thus, despite

²² Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primary and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, Chinese language edition, Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 1998, p. 61; see also, the English Edition, New York: Basic Books, 1997, p. 46.

²³ Bajpai, “India-US Foreign Policy Concerns”, p. 198.

²⁴ Robert Hathaway, “Unfinished Passage: India, Indian American and the U.S. Congress”, *Washington Quarterly*, Cambridge, MA, Spring 2001, vol. 24, no. 2, pp. 21-34.

the initial intent, the US policy has not entirely gone beyond the balance of power.

United States changed its security policy for the Asia-Pacific region

This is primarily demonstrated in the United States' increasing focus on the Asia-Pacific region or, more accurately, in the emergence of an integrated military strategy for the Europe-Atlantic region and the Asia-Pacific region. India and the Indian Ocean are expected to play an important role in such a geo-strategy. In the closing days of the Clinton administration, the containment of China gradually increased in importance as a factor influencing America's Asia-Pacific strategy. In addition to causing trouble on the Taiwan issue, the strategy of containment included reliance on Japanese and Indian Forces, and especially on the trend of enhancing India's capabilities to contain China. Giving the fact that counter-terrorism has become the primary issue in American strategy, the United States intends to use the war on terrorism to implement its military strategy in the Asia-Pacific region in addition to strengthening homeland security. The US military strategy in the Asia-Pacific region, consequently, includes securing influence and location in Central Asia; the limiting of Western Asia's development; and a return to South East Asia. Within this context, India and the Indian Ocean constitute the bridge for the United States in its regional military strategy.

The change in United States and India's relationship is also affected by Pakistan, China, and Russia

While Pakistan has attempted to balance Indian superiority by seeking external ties, India has perceived this as a way of upsetting the natural balance of power in South Asia.²⁵ For America, Pakistan's role in the United States' military strategy is

²⁵ Milind Thakar, "Coping with Insecurity: The Pakistani Variable in Indo-US Relations" in Gary K. Bertsch, Seema Gahlaut and Anupam Srivastava, eds., *Engaging India: US Strategic Relations with the World's Largest Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 223.

especially important when America's personal interests are in jeopardy (anti-communism, containment of the erstwhile Soviet Union, and counter terrorism). As Pakistan is a traditional ally of the United States and a frontline state in fighting terrorism, without a more normal India-Pakistan relationship, the India-US relationship will remain highly sensitive to Indian perceptions of Washington's relationship with Islamabad.

It is widely accepted both in the United States and India that China is likely to pose a long-term strategic challenge to them. How will China deal with the outer world after it consolidates its economic and technological ascent? There are different assumptions in the United States and India. Some believe that the future role of China in the Asia-Pacific region will be stable and defensive, rather than destructive and offensive. Others assume that – based on aspects of its strategic culture – China may undertake an offensive foreign policy at the point of time when Chinese leaders think the international balance of power is in their favor.²⁶ The United States and India have mutual interests, but different policies, in terms the nature of their future dealings with a rising China. There are also essential divergences on issues such as Taiwan and human rights between China and the United States. There are also basic differences on issues including border problems and non-proliferation between China and India.

With the end of the Cold War, the balance of power in South Asia has been upset, and the influence of Russia in South Asia has weakened. Russia still maintains a stable co-operative relationship with India, especially in the field of defense. In the joint statement of Russia-India strategic partnership issued on October 3, 2000, the two parties claimed “democratization of international relations” which is obviously aimed at hegemonies.²⁷ During President Putin's three-day visit to India in early December 2002, both sides signed the Delhi Declaration on Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership, which heightened

²⁶ Amitabh Mattoo, “Shadow of the Dragon: Indo-US Relations and China” in Gary K. Bertsch, Seema Gahlaut and Anupam Srivastava, eds., *Engaging India: US Strategic Relations with the World's Largest Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 1999, pp.217-8.

²⁷ Declaration on Strategic Partnership between Republic of India and the Russian Federation, October 3, 2000. See <http://meadev.nic.in/speeches/declaration-3oct2000.htm>.

the bilateral relations to a new level.²⁸

In conclusion, based on the rise of the Indian power, the importance of South Asia and the emergence of an Asia-Pacific perspective, the United States has gradually changed its balance of power policy. America is using the balance of power (method) to secure a power advantage (goal).

U.S.-India Security Relationship and China's Security Environment: Opportunities and Challenges

The India-China-U.S. Triangle: Malign Competition or Benign Interaction?

There are two defining characteristics of the security environment in the Asia-Pacific region after the end of Cold War: (1) The United States has become the only superpower in the world today. It is also the most important external power in Asia, and plays a key role in South Asian security; (2) China and India are emerging Asian powers. Each has a population of over a billion, possess nuclear weapons and numbers among the fastest growing economies in the world. Relations among these three countries will undoubtedly dominate the course of events within the Asia-Pacific region in the 21st century. Their interactions, and how they deal with the triangle will, to a large extent, influence future peace and stability in the region.

China and India, the two largest developing countries in the world, have a commonality of history, culture, economy and social characteristics, and profiles of development. Each applies itself to internal economic development, carries out an independent foreign policy and strives for a peaceful international environment. China and India are among what Brzezinski described as "five geo-strategic players"²⁹, what Henry Kissinger

²⁸ For full text of the Declaration, see South Asia Terrorism Portal; India; Documents; Delhi Declaration on Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation. www.satp.org

²⁹ Brzezinski identifies five "key geostrategic players" that are actively pursuing geopolitical interests (such as greater regional hegemony), which might conflict with the interests of the United States: France, Germany,

listed as the “six big powers”,³⁰ and what Samuel Huntington³¹ pointed out are “core states of seven civilizations.” China is a big power in East Asia while India is a big power in South Asia. Each has advantages and influence in their respective regions. However, they are not world powers that have global influence. In terms of institution and comprehensive strength, they cannot even be ranked as strong powers. For America, China and India, at one end, are two emerging markets offering economic benefits and developing opportunities. At the other end, China and India are also two transitional countries demonstrating uncertainty, from the United States’ strategic point of view. What Washington fears most is the possibility of China and India, with Russia, forming an alliance based on a common understanding and interests of a new international political and economical order and a multi-polar world.

The United States and India, the largest democracies in the world, share common political values and strategic interests. Their common geo-political, economic and socio-political interests are advancing a co-operative agenda (which their differences over nuclear proliferation may not be able to halt).³² With the US–India relationship moving forward over the past two years, the two countries have developed a comprehensive co-operative framework covering democracy, economy and security. The United States now pays more attention to India’s role as the largest democracy than it did before. India’s continuous and fast-growing economy, especially its information technology industry, attracts great investment from transnational corporations based in America. In the security arena, the U.S. leadership has gradually begun to ‘forget’ India’s nuclear tests and has come to recognize India as a *de facto* nuclear power, as also its preponderant position in South Asia. With India’s support for America’s

Russia, China, and India. See his *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997.

³⁰ Henry A. Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994, p. 23.

³¹ See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.

³² Kanti Bajpai, “India-US Foreign Policy Concerns: Cooperation and Conflict”, in Gary K. Bertsch, Seema Gahlaut, and Anupam Srivastava eds., *Engaging India--US Strategic Relations with the World's Largest Democracy*, New York: Routledge, 1999, p. 194.

unilateral action in missile defense, the US and India moved from divergence to co-operation in the field of non-proliferation. After 9/11, counter-terrorism has been a new field of strategic co-operation for U.S. and India. In a related development, Pakistan turns out to be less of an 'obstacle' for the US-India framework of relationships.

China and the United States, the largest developing and developed countries respectively, also have comprehensive common strategic interests. Besides large potential economic cooperation, they also share broad interests in other fields such as regional stability and the role and reform of the United Nations.

What is more likely is the emergence of a "soft balance of power" system among the three countries.³³ Alternately, at one end, a vicious competitive relationship among the three countries may emerge, and the "soft balance of power" may be changed into a "hard balance of power" similar to that in the Cold War era, if one of them regards the development of relations between the two other countries as a challenge to its national interests, or if any two in this triad forge a relationship as a means to contain the third country. At the other end, it is possible for China, the US and India to establish a relatively harmonious relationship if they can seek out common views and interests, and push their differences aside to deal with bilateral and trilateral relations within a strategic perspective.

South Asian security and China's security environment: stability or instability?

South Asia is one of the most unstable regions in world today. Focusing on the Kashmir issue, the conflict between India and Pakistan has lasted for more than half a century, during which three wars have been fought. The Kashmir issue includes many conflicting factors: territorial dispute, ethnic and religious divergence, political opposition and nuclear confrontation. One can also find in the Kashmir issue three threats for today's world: national separatism, religious extremism and cross-border terrorism. India and, immediately thereafter, Pakistan tested their

³³ Rajamony, *India-China-U.S. Triangle*, p. 8.

nuclear weapons and then became *de facto* nuclear powers in the year 1998. The United States has initiated a counter-terrorism campaign after 9/11, which focuses substantially on this region. These various elements are new factors in the conflict over Kashmir between India and Pakistan.

Nuclear proliferation in South Asia makes the Kashmir issue more dangerous. According to the assessment of the Institute for Science and International Security, if all of the plutonium available to it is made into nuclear weapons, India can produce 45-95 warheads; while if all of the plutonium and weapon-grade uranium available to Pakistan is converted to nuclear weapons, this could produce 30-50 warheads.³⁴ A May 2002 report published in *The New Scientist* pointed out that, if a limited nuclear war were to break out between India and Pakistan, 10 small warheads used in the five biggest cities of each of these countries, respectively, would kill three million people and injure even more.³⁵ The international community at large fears that a war between the two nuclear countries could open a Pandora's box and lead to the world's first nuclear war.

The struggle against terrorism makes the Kashmir issue even more complicated. After 9/11, India has sought increasingly and far more vigorously to establish the connections between terrorism and Pakistan. India has condemned the two Pakistan-based groups, the Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, that led the terrorist attack on India's Parliament on December 13, 2001, and that are also responsible for cross-border terrorist activities. Pakistan, on the other hand, actively works with the United States in the military campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan and claims that it is opposed to any fundamentalist organization or individuals who engage in terrorist activity in the name of Kashmir at home or abroad. However, President Musharraf has also declared that Pakistan would continue to support the Kashmiri struggle for independence 'morally, politically and diplomatically'.

In conclusion, nuclear tests and counter-terrorism make South Asia an international hotspot and a focus of global

³⁴ <http://www.isis-online.org/>

³⁵ "Three million would die in "limited" nuclear war over Kashmir," www.newscientist.com/news/news.jsp?id=ns99992326

attention. In terms of non-proliferation and anti-terrorism, China and the South Asian countries share common interests and a potential for co-operation. China borders most South Asian countries. Regional stability in South Asia is, consequently, an important guarantee for China's west and southwest security environment. China hopes that both India and Pakistan will try to solve their problems by political and diplomatic means. China's President, Jiang Zemin, recently made mention of an old Chinese saying, 'peace favours both and conflict injures either', when he attended the First Summit of the Member States of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)³⁶ which was convened in Almaty, Kazakhstan, on June 3-5, 2002.

The America factor in Sino-India relationships: positive or passive?

India, in the assessment of one Indian scholar, has always viewed close US-China relations with misgivings and feared that they might adversely affect her interests.³⁷ Three factors dominate this evaluation: (1) During the 1971 India-Pakistan war, the US and China jointly supported Pakistan. The US had sent its Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal to threaten India. (2) In India's perception, the United States was guilty by omission of ignoring China's actions in actively building up Pakistan's nuclear deterrence against India through the nineteen eighties, because both China and Pakistan were US allies in fighting the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. (3) Soon after India's nuclear tests in 1998, the United States and China issued a Joint Communiqué to condemn these.³⁸

In comparison to the up-and-down Sino-U.S. relationship framework, the US-India relationship has witnessed an upswing after the end of the Cold War. The perception that regards an 'emerging China' as a threat is beginning to dominate policy-

³⁶ The 16 member states of the CICA are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Palestine, Tajikistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan.

³⁷ Rajamony, *India-China-U.S. Triangle*, p. 37.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 37-39.

making circles in both the US and India. This will be harmful for both Sino-US and Sino-India relations. For America, China and India are two major powers that can influence security affairs in the Asia-Pacific, especially in East Asia and South Asia. China and India are also populous, transitional and emerging big powers. Both China and India regards their relations with the US as their most important external relationship.

The economic development of China and India needs America's cooperation and support. At the same time, America needs the huge markets of the two big Asian countries. The United States could be a positive factor for Sino-India relationships – if it tries to promote regional stability in South Asia and help China and India's economic modernization. It could, as well, cast itself in a negative role – when it plays the 'India card' in its dealings with China; or plays the 'China card' in developing its relations with India.

Within China, in recent years, there has been a fundamental reassessment of South Asia and its importance in geo-politics, as well as of India and its role in regional affairs. The nature of Sino-Indian relationships should be “good neighbors in geo-politics, good friends in economic cooperation, and good partners in international affairs.”³⁹ Such a relationship must be established on the basis of their common sense and understanding of mutual interests. Through economic co-operation and regional stability, China, the US and India should and would be able to reach a 'win-win-win' situation.

³⁹ Ma Jiali, *Focusing on India-A Rising Power*, Tianjing: Tianjing People's Publishing House, 2002, p. 222. Author's own translation.