

Changing US Priorities and Constraints in South Asian Regional Politics (1990-2001)

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Abstract

This study investigates how the United States' engagement in South Asia changed between 1990 and 2001, a time of significant geopolitical and strategic changes. Following the end of the Cold War, the balance of power in the region changed significantly, creating new security issues that required fresh American focus. The study identifies several interconnected events that influenced US policy during this decade, including the escalation of the nuclear rivalry between India and Pakistan, the rise of Al-Qaeda as a transnational jihadist-militant group, the growing militancy and state fragility in Afghanistan after the Soviet withdrawal, and the ongoing political unrest in Pakistan. When taken as a whole, these elements redefined South Asia's strategic importance to Washington. The study shows that the cumulative effects of regional crises that increasingly intersected with US global security interests drove US engagement rather than a single incident. The United States was forced to go from relative disengagement in the early 1990s to stronger involvement by the end of the decade due to the consolidation of Taliban control in Afghanistan, the growth of Islamist networks, and the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the subcontinent. By giving an evaluation of U.S. engagements in India-Pakistan armed conflict, nuclear proliferation, and the rise of extremism in Afghanistan, this study argues that although the U.S. attempted to maintain a balance of power in the region, it revealed the limitations of its influence on the South Asian states. The study concludes that these changes set the stage for South Asia's post-9/11 strategic paradigm, making the years 1990–2001 crucial for the long-term regional involvement of the United States of America. The descriptive-cum-analytical methodology is employed to construe the discourse of this study.

Keywords: U.S, Foreign Policy, South Asia, Economic Aid, Nuclear Proliferation, Taliban

Introduction

US policy toward South Asia experienced a dramatic change in the post-Cold War era, influenced by evolving global strategic circumstances. The long-standing American apprehension over Soviet influence in the Indian Ocean and access to the Arabian Sea significantly decreased with the fall of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Washington consequently adjusted its regional goals, interacting

with both India and Pakistan using a new strategic perspective that was opposed to the security framework of the Cold War.¹ The United States responded more and more to changes and challenges coming from within the region itself under this reoriented strategy. Concerns like nuclear non-proliferation became more prominent, especially in light of the growing nuclear programs of Pakistan and India. At the same time, human rights, democratic government, and the advancement of free-market economic reforms were key tenets of U.S. regional policy. In the 1990s, Washington's broader global strategy was reflected in these shifting priorities, which positioned South Asia as a region requiring engagement on political, economic, and security fronts rather than merely as a theater of superpower rivalry.

This study goes into how the United States viewed the regional dynamics of South Asia after the withdrawal of the Soviets from the region and dealt with emerging issues such as political instability in the region, nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan, and the rise of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. It explains why Pakistan, a close ally of the US during the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), became no more important to the superpower, and India became a US priority over Pakistan. It further evaluates the deterrence acts of India and Pakistan to achieve the status of nuclear powers in the face of mutual rivalry, and the US measures to stop them from doing so. It examines the United States' apprehension and policy about the emergence of the Taliban regime and the consequent threat of religious extremism and militancy in Afghanistan. This study argues that although the United States emerged as the sole superpower after the end of the Cold War, its attempts to regulate and manage regional politics in South Asia demonstrated obvious limitations in its ability to wield decisive force. This was because India and Pakistan pursued their own national interests in accordance with their own understanding of the circumstances. Similarly, the emergence and growing influence of the Taliban in Afghanistan was owing to the chaotic political situation of Afghanistan and the involvement of regional actors like Pakistan. The US, hence, failed to effectively address its policy to contain radical ideology and terrorism stemming from Afghanistan.

Research Questions

The following are the major research questions to be addressed in this study.

1. In what ways did the United States' management of conflicts in South Asia be influenced by its security concerns?
2. How did the United States' concern about nuclear escalation impact its approach to India and Pakistan?
3. What were the strategic and security implications of U.S. policies toward the Taliban for South Asian stability and counterterrorism efforts?

US Inclination towards India

The administration of U.S. President Bill Clinton was instrumental in changing American foreign policy toward South Asia in the post-Cold War era, especially concerning India. Emerging geopolitical realities, including the waning bipolar competition, the emergence of new economic hubs, and the growing strategic importance of Asia, had an impact on Clinton's policies. In order to achieve a balanced strategy in Asia, his administration started to see India as a viable democratic counterweight to China's growing regional dominance while also pursuing a cooperative strategic alliance with China. Washington reevaluated India's place in the world by the middle of the 1990s in light of the country's developing industry and technology, liberalized economy, and bolstered democratic institutions. Consequently, the relations between the United States and India changed. Both states increased communication and looked for areas of convergence in security, commerce,

¹Hussain, N., & Sangay, K. A. (2012). The Russian Resurgence and South Asian Region. *IPRI Journal*, 15-34.

and regional stability, which had been referred to as “estranged democracies” during the majority of the Cold War, and gradually changed into “engaged democracies.”

In the late 1990s, the United States started to lean more toward India. The Clinton administration employed diplomatic engagement to restore confidence and create long-term strategic channels despite tensions over India’s 1998 nuclear tests, as demonstrated by Deputy Secretary Strobe Talbott’s lengthy talks with Indian officials. Clinton’s historic trip to India in March 2000 signaled the official start of a new chapter in bilateral relations and was a major turning point.

Several significant milestones in the post-Cold War era provide insight into the growing U.S.-India partnership:

1. By establishing extensive collaboration arrangements, the United States greatly expanded its institutional connection with India. These included deepening cooperation in defense and dual-use technologies, increasing trade and investment channels, and holding frequent high-level political discussions. A long-term strategic relationship was made possible by this institutionalization and collaboration.
2. The Clinton administration placed a greater emphasis on non-military, diplomatic solutions to the Kashmir conflict. Washington encouraged bilateral communication as the main means of resolving disputes and urged Pakistan and India to respect the Line of Control (LoC). Although the United States promoted peace and stability for all sides, its strategy—especially its condemnation of cross-border militancy—tended to be more in line with India’s stance, which helped New Delhi diplomatically.
3. India’s geographic importance and expanding influence in South Asia and the larger Indo-Pacific region were recognized by the United States. This insight led to deeper political, economic, and strategic engagement with India, often surpassing Washington’s degree of cooperation with Pakistan concurrently.
4. India became one of Asia’s top receivers of US economic and food assistance by the late 1990s. India was the second-largest beneficiary of U.S. aid in the area, behind Indonesia, with a total of around \$170 million in Fiscal Year 2000.² Pakistan, on the other hand, only received around \$ 5.3 million,³ indicating a stark disparity in U.S. development goals and further demonstrating Washington’s increasing geopolitical preference for India.

The reasons behind the US inclinations towards India are as following:

1. India, which had long depended on Moscow for military supplies, diplomatic backing, and a strategic counterbalance against Western pressure, experienced uncertainty following the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. India could no longer rely on Moscow to offset U.S. influence due to Russia’s diminishing global prominence and weakening military and economic capabilities. India was forced by this change to reconsider its foreign policy and turn its attention to Washington.
2. India’s non-aligned stance was viewed with distrust by the US throughout the Cold War, particularly because of India’s close relations with the Soviet Union. But following 1991, the United States reassessed India as a responsible regional player with a stable political structure, democratic credentials, and expanding economic potential. India was increasingly viewed by

² USAFacts, “How much foreign aid does the US provide to India?” at <https://usafacts.org/answers/how-much-foreign-aid-does-the-us-provide/countries/india/> (dated 12-03-2026).

³ A Report of the American Congress, “The Limits of U.S. Assistance to Pakistan: A Special Comprehensive Audit of All U.S. Assistance to Pakistan Is Essential,” July 18, 2011. at https://www.americanprogress.org/article/the-limits-of-u-s-assistance-to-pakistan/?utm_source=chatgpt.com (dated 12-03-2026).

American policymakers as a state with which strategic cooperation was both possible and desirable, rather than as an ideological adversary.

3. Pakistan's position as a frontline state in U.S. strategic thinking drastically decreased when the Soviet Union withdrew from Afghanistan in 1989 and the Cold War ended. Bilateral relations were further strained by other issues, including Pakistan's nuclear development, political unrest, and sanctions under the Pressler Amendment. India was seen by the US as a more dependable and long-term partner for regional peace, security cooperation, and balancing new geopolitical problems as Pakistan's strategic significance dwindled during the late 1990s.
4. India undertook significant economic reforms under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao (1991–1996), transitioning from a state-run economy to a market-oriented one.⁴ Indian marketplaces became more accessible to foreign commerce, investment, and technology collaborations as a result of liberalization. India was soon acknowledged as one of the most attractive emerging markets in the world by the US and other Western and European economies. India's sizable population, growing middle class, and increasing consumer demand gave American companies a plethora of opportunities and strengthened the economic incentives for deeper bilateral ties.
5. India's lengthy history of civilian administration and its position as the greatest democracy in the world have been strongly assumed to be aligned with American foreign policy ideals. India provided a more dependable, institutionally stable partner than Pakistan, which was often ruled by the military and occasionally saw political unrest. In fields including government, civil society, education, and international human rights discourse, shared democratic values improved diplomatic understanding and promoted collaboration.

US Sanctions on Pakistan

Due to several restrictions implemented throughout the 1990s, Pakistan received very little help from the United States before September 2001. The United States' \$ 5.3 million in aid to Pakistan in Fiscal Year 2000 was mostly focused on food assistance and anti-drug initiatives. These limitations resulted mainly in three phases. First, the Pressler Amendment sanctions of 1990,⁵ which were triggered when Pakistan was unable to certify compliance regarding its nuclear program. Second, the Section 508 sanctions were imposed following General Pervez Musharraf's 1999 military coup. Thirdly, the Glenn Amendment sanctions followed Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests. Taken as a whole, these actions drastically decreased military and economic cooperation, putting Pakistan at one of its lowest levels of U.S. involvement since the 1980s.

The United States' preference for India was not total nor permanent, despite this limited environment and Washington's rising geopolitical predisposition toward India in the late 1990s, which was sometimes presented as a "India First" posture. Pakistan continued to be relevant in U.S. strategic considerations, as seen by President Bill Clinton's brief but symbolically significant five-hour visit there in March 2000. Clinton emphasized that Pakistan's role in maintaining peace along the western border and the ongoing Kashmir conflict were just as important as its geographic location in the face of growing Taliban terrorism in Afghanistan. Therefore, the United States recognized Pakistan's

⁴ K.S. Hiranmayi and Peteti Premanandam, "The Role of PV Narasimha Rao in India Economic Reforms, *International Journal of Political Science (IJPS)*, Volume 1, Issue 1, January-June 2024, pp. 1-6. At https://iaeme.com/MasterAdmin/Journal_uploads/IJPSC/VOLUME_1_ISSUE_1/IJPSC_01_01_001.pdf (dated 10-03-2026)

⁵ Daniel Morrow and Michael Carriere, "The Economic Impacts of the 1998 Sanctions on India and Pakistan," *The Nonproliferation Review*, Fall 1999, pp. 1-16.

crucial role in the regional security framework even at a time of sanctions and diplomatic pressure.⁶ Theoretically, smaller states are frequently subject to increased scrutiny and pressure due to changes in great-power dynamics. Pakistan's nuclear program was closely monitored by the United States following the Soviet Union's departure from Afghanistan, which created a climate of international restraint on Pakistan's political and economic advancement. Pakistan tried to broaden its ties in response, but in 1990 the United States imposed the long-planned Pressler Amendment sanctions.⁷ These sanctions jeopardized Pakistan's nuclear program, stopped military and economic help, and froze almost \$700 million in funding that had been delayed between 1988 and 1994.

Sanctions serve as instruments of uneven power relations, as demonstrated by theoretical perspectives on coercive diplomacy. Despite Pakistan's advance payment of over \$1 billion, the United States refused to supply F-16 fighter fighters under the Pressler Amendment. This decision was generally viewed as unfair in Islamabad. Given Pakistan's sacrifices during the Afghan-Soviet conflict, which had primarily served U.S. strategic goals, the sanctions caused economic hardship and increased political dissatisfaction. Pakistan's belief that its security concerns were disregarded and its efforts were underappreciated was cemented by the experience.

In order to achieve strategic depth, nations frequently coordinate with nearby forces, according to regional security theories. Geographical, ethnic, and economic considerations, including as cross-border ethnic links, trade routes to Central Asia and Europe, and the need to negotiate refugee return, influenced Pakistan's support of the Taliban regime in 1997, despite international opposition.⁸ Additionally, Islamabad anticipated that the Taliban, who showed sympathy for Pakistan, would contribute to Afghanistan's stabilization. Instead, international players raised diplomatic tensions by accusing Pakistan of facilitating the Taliban's ascent.⁹

The notion of strategic competition provides an example of how regional players become caught up in the aspirations of global dominance. Pakistan was viewed as the only nation competent to act as a mediator between Washington and Kabul since the Taliban blocked the United States' attempts to get access to Central Asian Republics for geopolitical and oil purposes.¹⁰ In 1998, Pakistan made an effort to influence the Taliban, but their unyielding stance and subsequent connections with border tribes signaled the start of transnational militancy that affected Pakistan. Following 9/11, Pakistan once more asked the Taliban to turn up Osama bin Laden; however, their rejection led to NATO action, which quickly overthrew the Taliban government and altered the strategic terrain of the area.

Factors Responsible for Changing US Strategies

Some prominent factors are responsible for the US strategies changing, i.e., the improvements in India-US relations and mistrust in Pakistan-US relations in the late 1990s. in the United. State strategies toward the South Asian region. Important factors are mentioned as follows:

1. Although the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan was a major issue in India-US ties, Pakistan's political and strategic significance in South Asia suddenly disappeared for the West.¹¹
2. India's fast economic growth has made it a more important economic partner for the United States, whereas Pakistan's economy has mostly depended on outside aid. The United States,

⁶Mohan, N. C. India's Engagement with Africa.

⁷Yousaf, M., & Adkin, M. (1992). *The bear trap: Afghanistan's untold story* (p. 22). Lahore: Jang Publishers.

⁸Burghart, D., & Sabonis-Helf, T. (2004). *In the tracks of Tamerlane: Central Asia's path to the 21st century*. National Defense Univ Washington Dc Center for Technology and National Security Policy.

⁹Baxter, C. (Ed.). (2004). *Pakistan on the brink: politics, economics, and society*. Lexington Books.

¹⁰Verma, A. K. (2001). *Reassessing Pakistan: Role of two-nation theory*. Lancer Publishers.

¹¹Cohen, S. P. (2011). *The future of Pakistan*. Brookings Institution Press.

China, and other international economic organizations have continued to provide Pakistan with substantial financial support over the years

3. In contrast to the Pakistani-American community, which has historically been smaller and less significant in influencing American political and economic life, the Indian-American community in the United States is wealthy and powerful.¹²
4. For international marine trade connecting East Asia with the Atlantic region, the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf are strategically significant. These maritime routes influenced global geopolitics during the Cold War. India, rather than Pakistan, has been a more important player in this regional geopolitical framework in recent years as the United States changed its strategic goals to handle maritime competition from China and Russia.
5. From a U.S. standpoint, Pakistan and India have distinct perspectives. Pakistan is frequently seen as politically unstable because of military control and ongoing economic difficulties, whereas India is increasingly seen as a rising democratic and economic force.¹³
6. China, India, and Russia were seen by some U.S. strategists as rising strategic powers. Yevgeny Primakov, the prime minister of Russia, suggested a strategic triangle involving China, India, and Russia in 1999. Pakistan's involvement in regional power dynamics was restricted within this geopolitical framework.¹⁴

To safeguard its own strategic interests, the United States concentrated on stopping the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) throughout the post-Cold War era. The goal of U.S. security strategy in South Asia was to keep India and Pakistan from going to nuclear war. The Kashmir dispute and the regional weapons race prompted the United States to devise a new strategy for managing tensions in the area, while the 1998 nuclear tests and the 1999 Kargil battle greatly influenced U.S. perspectives towards the regional politics of South Asia.

United States' Engagement in South Asia regarding Nuclear Proliferation

The United States was extremely concerned about nuclear proliferation in South Asia throughout the 1990s, especially with reference to India and Pakistan. Particular emphasis was paid to Pakistan's nuclear weapons program, which had advanced dramatically under Abdul Qadeer Khan since the 1970s. Fears that Pakistan's nuclear programs may destabilize the area were heightened by the long-standing rivalry between India and Pakistan, particularly after India's nuclear test in 1974 pushed Pakistan to seek a similar deterrent. The United States used diplomatic pressure and laws like the Pressler Amendment, which required penalties if Pakistan was discovered to have nuclear weapons, to allay these worries.

The United States was also concerned that nuclear technology and materials from India or Pakistan would end up in the hands of non-state actors or other nations. According to intelligence, both countries pursued cutting-edge nuclear technology, frequently through clandestine means. The United States strengthened export regulations and used organizations like the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) to stop illicit transfers and proliferation and a regional arms race—or nuclear terrorism. The United States believed that South Asian nuclear proliferation may endanger international security and inspire other countries to seek nuclear weapons, particularly in light of India-Pakistan tensions

¹²Hassan, N. (2011). *An American Experience*. Lulu. com.

¹³McMahon, R. J. (1994). *The cold war on the periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*. Columbia University Press.

¹⁴McMahon, R. J. (1994). *The cold war on the periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan*. Columbia University Press.

over Kashmir. Washington promoted regional weapons control through diplomacy, sanctions, and security assurances in order to handle these threats.

Pakistan's Nuclear Tests and International Response

India's nuclear program started with the "Smiling Buddha" test in 1974 and culminated with tests in 1998 that frightened Pakistan. In response, Pakistan carried out its own tests in May 1998, bolstering its strategic deterrent, demonstrating scientific mastery, and igniting pride in the country amid tensions in the area.¹⁵ Pakistan was under tremendous international pressure, particularly from the US, to halt the country's nuclear program development before conducting its nuclear tests in May 1998.

Officials in the Clinton administration often warned that any nuclear collision would have disastrous consequences, including economic fines and diplomatic isolation. Senior U.S. officials, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, emphasized that Pakistan's actions may undermine global non-proliferation initiatives and cause instability in South Asia. President Bill Clinton said, "By failing to exercise restraint and responding to the Indian test, Pakistan lost a truly priceless opportunity ... two wrongs don't make a right." Clinton further added that "It is now more urgent ... that both Pakistan and India renounce further tests, sign the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty ... and take decisive steps to reduce tensions in South Asia."¹⁶

Pakistan's political leadership and nuclear experts remained unwavering in the face of these warnings, emphasizing that the tests were necessary to protect national security in an area already influenced by India's nuclear capacity. Pakistan reaffirmed its sovereign right to defend its territorial integrity and national interests in addition to demonstrating strategic parity with India.¹⁷

Kargil War 1999: Regional Instability

The 1999 Kargil Conflict, which resulted in hundreds of dead and increased concerns of a nuclear conflict, revealed the precarious security dynamics between India and Pakistan. By emphasizing how regional conflicts in a nuclearized South Asia might jeopardize both regional and global stability, foreign powers, particularly the United States, called for diplomacy. The Kashmir conflict was examined more thoroughly by international powers following Pakistan's nuclear tests. Pakistan's unsuccessful Kargil expedition drew criticism from throughout the world. Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral avoided discussing Kashmir in favor of trade and culture during the 1997 SAARC meeting. The majority of countries in the world, including India, rejected Pakistan's nuclear tests in May 1998, exposing what many perceived as the international community's double standards. The Indian army did not oppose the clandestine Kargil operation when it started in the winter of 1999, but by the summer, fighting had broken out, garnering international attention.¹⁸ Improving relations was the goal of earlier diplomatic initiatives, such as Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to Pakistan in February 1999. Pakistan learned lessons about regional dynamics and global strategic realities, despite the operation's strategic flaws and widespread perception as a failure.¹⁹

Given the increased possibility of escalation between two nuclear-armed powers, the United powers expressed serious concern over the 1999 Kargil Conflict. Washington kept a careful eye on the

¹⁵Altizer, N., Angley, P., Bell, A., & Coullie, J. (2005), "Reviewed Elsewhere," *Biography*, 28(3), 452.

¹⁶ AP Archive, "USA-Clinton comments on Pakistan's nuclear tests" *AP Archive*, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C5iFrTJhCJc> (dated 23 November 2025)

¹⁷Schwartz, S. I. (2011). *Atomic audit: the costs and consequences of US nuclear weapons since 1940*. Brookings Institution Press.

¹⁸Murray, W., & Mansoor, P. R. (Eds.). (2012). *Hybrid warfare: fighting complex opponents from the ancient world to the present*. Cambridge University Press.

¹⁹Ganguly, Š. (2002). *Conflict unending: India-Pakistan tensions since 1947*. Columbia University Press.

situation because it was concerned that a protracted military conflict between India and Pakistan may destabilize the area and perhaps lead to more international intervention. U.S. authorities, including President Bill Clinton, emphasized that ongoing hostilities may jeopardize international security and non-proliferation efforts and encouraged both parties to display moderation and resume communication.

U.S. fears about regional instability in South Asia were heightened by the 1999 Kargil Conflict, especially in light of India and Pakistan's nuclear capabilities. The United States responded diplomatically by encouraging Pakistan to remove its troops and allowing backchannel negotiations, all the while highlighting the significance of peaceful conflict resolution. President Bill Clinton was directly involved; he called and wrote to both Prime Ministers, Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and Nawaz Sharif of Pakistan, urging them to defuse the situation.²⁰ Sharif and Clinton met at Blair House in Washington on July 4th, Clinton made it plain that the Pakistani military must “withdraw from the Line of Control (LoC).”²¹ He urged a “full and complete withdrawal without pre-conditions.”²² Washington’s strategic interest in fostering peace, averting escalation, and continuing to actively participate in South Asian affairs as a mediator and a deterrent to nuclear conflict was brought to light by the crisis. Bruce Riedel states that “the turning point was the Kargil war.... The trajectory of America’s engagement with India was set.”²³

US Concerns about the Taliban Regime in Afghanistan

The United States had serious geopolitical concerns about the emergence of Taliban rule in Afghanistan in the 1990s because of the consequences for security, terrorism, and regional stability. Following the Soviet Union’s 1989 exit from Afghanistan and the ensuing civil war between several Afghan factions, the Taliban became a powerful force in 1994 and pledged to impose strict Islamic rule to restore order. After seizing Kabul and establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 1996, they marginalized opposition organizations like the Northern Alliance and imposed a strict interpretation of Sharia. The United States was concerned about these developments, especially since the dictatorship gave extremist organizations—most notably al-Qaeda—safe havens from which to launch strikes against American interests.

The Taliban’s intimate ties to Osama bin Laden and other worldwide jihadist networks frightened the United States, which saw Afghanistan as a possible hub for international terrorism. The possibility that Afghanistan under Taliban administration may turn into a “terrorist sanctuary” endangering not just U.S. national security but also regional neighbors like Pakistan, India, and Iran was frequently emphasized by U.S. officials, particularly those in the State Department and intelligence agencies.²⁴ The United States’ goals of fostering stability and combating terrorism in South and Central Asia were directly challenged by the Taliban’s actions, which included providing sanctuary to terrorists and endorsing radical ideology.

In response, the United States sought to influence the Taliban government and curtail its support for

²⁰ Arshad Mohammad, “Clinton Wins Kashmir Promise,” *The Guardian*, 5 July, 1999.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/1999/jul/05/kashmir.india> (dated: 21-11-2025)

²¹ K. P. Nayyar, “Revealed: Clinton’s Kargil Crisis Secret-Autobiography US Intervention Was Not Voluntary, Prompted by Sharif,” *The Telegraph Online*, 22-06-2004. https://www.telegraphindia.com/india/revealed-clinton-s-kargil-crisis-secret-autobiography-says-us-intervention-was-not-voluntary-prompted-by-sharif/cid/738073?utm_source=chatgpt.com#goog_rewarded (dated : 21-11-2025)

²² Bruce Riedel, “How the 1999 Kargil conflict redefined US-India ties,” *Brooking*, July 24, 2019.

²³ Bruce, “How the 1999 Kargil conflict redefined US-India ties,” *Brooking*, July 24, 2019.

²⁴ *United States Congressional Serial Set, Serial No. 14750: Joint Inquiry Into Intelligence Community Activity Before and After Terrorists Attacks of September 11, 2001 With Errata*, (United States Government Printing Press, 2003) p. 238.

terrorism through a variety of diplomatic, economic, and clandestine initiatives. In addition to providing political and military assistance to the Northern Alliance and other opposition forces, this involved attempts to isolate the Taliban internationally through United Nations sanctions, visa restrictions, and the suspension of foreign aid to Afghanistan. Washington's involvement during this time demonstrated the United States' commitment to combating extremist networks and advancing a stable regional order in South Asia by strategically attempting to keep Afghanistan from turning into a refuge for terrorists.

On 12 October 1999, General Musharraf toppled the elected but inept Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif. Three days later, the American Ambassador William Milam handed him a letter from President Clinton chastising the general for taking power by illegal means, and urged him to establish a road map for restoring democracy. Simultaneously, however, Clinton wanted Musharraf's help in apprehending Osama. Musharraf advised Clinton to 'engage with the Taliban, seek their moderation, and to win the hearts and minds of the Afghans. The U.S by this time was convinced that very solid links had developed between Pakistani intelligence (ISI), Osama bin Laden, the Taliban, and other jihadi organizations functioning from Afghanistan and Pakistan. This grand alliance included Pakistan's regional objective, bleeding Indian forces in Kashmir, and helping the Taliban defeat the Northern Alliance, where Massoud was the charismatic and shining star. The Clinton administration feared that Pakistan's incursions into Kashmir might provoke a nuclear war with India.²⁵

George W. Bush succeeded Clinton in 2001; uninitiated in foreign policy, Bush did not even know the name of Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf. Bush's closest foreign policy advisers were not experts on South Asian politics. Musharraf wrote a letter to Bush, outlining common ground between Pakistan and the US, and asking for closer ties. The US response held out the prospect of improved relations after the Osama problem was resolved²⁶. The impasse between the two governments continued, while the Americans believed that Pakistani intelligence could do much more to help track Osama's location and destroy his network of terrorist camps. The US government invited the head of the ISI, Lieutenant General Mahmud Ahmed, to Washington in September 2001.²⁷ While US diplomacy failed with Mulla Umar, it succeeded in isolating Afghanistan. In the last week of September 2001, Saudi Arabia broke off diplomatic relations, and shortly after, the United Arab Emirates did the same. Pakistan continued to maintain a channel of communication with Afghanistan right up to the start of US military action, when the Afghan Ambassador in Islamabad was arrested and, against all diplomatic traditions, handed over to the US.²⁸

Since the tragedy of 11 September, relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan have become so symbiotic that at times the two neighbors appear to be twins tied at the hip. However, an analysis of Pakistan's security situation and economic development also requires an examination of its relationship with India—a relationship growing under the umbrella of the US. In the not-too-distant future, Pakistan will impinge upon the grand architectural design of the US, especially in its strategic policy toward China, which appears to have the features of the policy of containment, which was so successfully applied to the Soviet Union.²⁹

²⁵ Kanishk Sathasivam, *Uneasy Neighbors: India, Pakistan, and US Foreign Policy*, (Taylor & Francis: 2005), p. 141.

²⁶ Sathasivam, *Uneasy Neighbour*, p. 141

²⁷ A. H. Nayyar, 'Musharraf Education Frozen in Time', in *Education and the State: Fifty Years of Pakistan*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 178.

²⁸ US Department of State, *The United States and Global Coalition against Terrorism*, Washington DC, September 2001 – December 2003, p. 194.

²⁹ Chirs Johnson and Jolyon Leslie, 'Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace', London: ed Books, 2004, p. 218.

Post 9/11 Scenario and the Restoration of Pak-U. S. Relations

American President George Walker Bush ascended to office in January 2001. Pak-US relations have been too worse since the 1990s. During the new administration of George W. Bush implemented his preference “India is first”. It was an old American strategic policy in the South Asian region.³⁰ Anyhow, the terrorist incident of September 11, 2001, abruptly frustrated the “India is first” American policy. According to U.S President George Walker Bush’s administration, it felt the greatest thoughtful challenges of the US because in the future it was no longer the “Chinese threats” but “terrorist activities”. Now America had become a furious cow that could hit anyone unknowingly. After the 9/11 incident, the USA was getting a chance to station in the Middle as well as Central Asian states under a strong strategic position. For this grand task, the USA wanted to use its old friend, Pakistan. The reason was that Pakistan had been a faithful and trustworthy friend to America³¹. On 13th September 2001, the American Wendy Chamberlin Diplomat, visited Pakistan. He met Pervaiz Musharraf, the president of Pakistan. He expressed his desire that Pakistan should cooperate with the USA in the war against terrorism³².

During this, Richard Armitage, American Deputy Secretary of State, visited Pakistan, who conveyed a list of seven requests to Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which were:

1. Cut off the links between Al-Qaeda and Bin Laden logistically
2. to allow for the military operations, the USA demands areas in Pakistan
3. Pakistan’s intelligence provides serious information to the USA
4. It should allow the military and the intelligence actions of the USA as well as its allies to operate against Al-Qaida in the Pakistani rocky areas;
5. The Pakistani public condemns the terrorist acts.
6. to block all fuel sources to the Taliban and Afghanistan;
7. to terminate the relations with Taliban and Al-Qaeda (National Commission on Terrorist Attacks, 2001)

Pakistan’s Administration at that time accepted all American demands without any hesitation. Musharraf’s argumentations sought an expected coalition between both administrations. So, to accept the American request in the shape of threats was inevitable. So, soon after the 9/11 incidents, both sides abruptly condemned each other’s thoughts, but later, both powers, Pakistan and the US, promised to cooperate to battle against extremism globally. In October 2001, with the acceptance of American requests by Pakistan, in no time, all kinds of economic as well as nuclear sanctions imposed by the USA on Pakistan were lifted. Along with it, all other unexpected USAIDS started to pour into Pakistan without any hesitation, checking, or resistance.

On 12 November 2001, for the duration of President Musharraf’s visit to the USA, both countries Pakistan and the USA, concluded a Joint Statement. In this statement, it was emphasized to keep the fifty-year friendship between the two states. Pak-US military collaborations strengthened in no time, right from these special points. On September 13th, 2001, with the support of Pakistan, the USA Military started to station in its required and pointed places and territories. It was only the base of a non-offensive operation. However, the USA forces tried their best to secure their required targets. So that the real wish could be fulfilled in a short time, but every side was aware of the other’s eyes. US forces were allowed to carry on every military action against terrorism in the Afghan areas and extend it to the eastern side. Moreover, the commitments ensured the security of naval forces. Pakistani

³⁰Jain, A. N. (2009). *Diasporic tensions*. The Claremont Graduate University.

³¹Hoffman, B., & Reinaras, F. (Eds.). (2014). *The evolution of the global terrorist threat: From 9/11 to Osama bin Laden's death*. Columbia University Press.

³²Riedel, B. (2012). *Deadly embrace: Pakistan, America, and the future of the global Jihad*. Brookings Institution Press.

leaders agreed to provide the USA with intelligence to acquire in the Pak-Afghan areas (Cohen & Dasgupta, 2001³³).

Pakistani forces participated in American Operations against terrorist active areas in Pakistan. Pakistani forces continued to organize with the U.S in its detection of Taliban groups. After this, joint strict action Taliban organization was overthrown in December 2001³⁴. In January 2002, Pervaiz Musharraf announced, there is no base of terrorism in Pakistan. All is ended in smoke. No terrorist point remains in Pakistan. Now Pakistan is free from the terrors. In return of these sacrifices in the war against terrorism US granted Pakistan several aids. Right of entry to several up-to-date weapons through craft and aids was also provided to Pakistan.

In June 2004, G.W. Bush officially announced with special thanks, Pakistan, under Section 517 of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, in U.S. law is and was one of our major non-NATO allies. After this, all bans from the USA on Pakistan due to security, defense, and nuclear program's progress ended, and Pakistan got a good chance to improve its military power.³⁵

The Major effect of the newly developing powers, with the passage of time, has been affecting the global relationships. Indian power had been a vital role player in the variations of Pak-US relations. Raising the Indian power since the 1990s has been creating robust security pressure on Pakistan. This action of India had been convincing the state to reform its international relationships globally. The U.S rules for Pakistan had been considering the cumulative impact of China in the South Asian region. Since the 1990s decade when Pakistan started its role as an important ally in that area, the global powers started to extend handshakes with Pakistan, particularly in the economic field as well as military fields. Now, Pakistan has several choices as a result of its isolation from any global power. This changing strategic position of Pakistan would influence the global relationship in this region in favor of China. While Washington authority has another strategic point of view.

Pak-US relation has heavy-duty impacts on other countries and on the South Asian area. Although in the war against terrorism, Pakistan has facilitated the US, but the US has always been inclined towards India in every time of trial, Pakistan, and no regional issue for Pakistan's interest is solved under the US umbrella³⁶.

Conclusion

Due to regional and worldwide events, U.S. interests in South Asian politics changed significantly between 1990 and 2001. South Asia's strategic significance diminished following the conclusion of the Cold War, which resulted in little interaction and tense ties with Pakistan over nuclear proliferation and the Pressler sanctions. However, India's economic liberalization created new opportunities and progressively increased its significance in U.S. strategy. Washington adopted a balanced stance toward both India and Pakistan as a result of the 1998 nuclear tests by both countries and the escalating unrest in Afghanistan, which reaffirmed the region's importance.

During the 1990s, the United States leaned more toward India due to its booming economy and massive population, while its involvement with Pakistan grew more limited. Although the US pushed both nations to suspend their nuclear projects, it was unable to dissuade them from pursuing nuclear weapons, since each acted in accordance with its national security goals and deterrence strategy. At the same time, the United States was unable to successfully restrict the Taliban's ascendancy and the

³³Kronstadt, K. A. (2009, February). Pakistan-US relations. Library of Congress Washington Dc Congressional Research Service.

³⁴Ahmad, M. (2010). Implications of the War on Terror for Khyber Pukhtunkhwa, Pakistan. *Journal of Critical Globalisation Studies*, (3).

³⁵Woolf, A. F. (2010). *Non-strategic nuclear weapons*. DIANE Publishing.

³⁶Javaid, P. D. U., & Mushtaq, I. (2020). Historical perspective of Pakistan USA relations; lessons for Pakistan. *South Asian Studies*, 29(1).

propagation of extreme beliefs in Afghanistan, which exacerbated security concerns and terrorism. The advent of the Taliban and increased terrorism by the late 1990s caused the United States to turn its attention to security and counterterrorism, with India emerging as a strategic partner and Pakistan emerging as a crucial partner. South Asia became a focal area of U.S. foreign policy after the terrorist events on September 11, 2001. All things considered, the decade shows a shift from post-Cold War disengagement and non-proliferation concerns to broader strategic commitment with a focus on security, counterterrorism, and regional stability, setting the stage for continued U.S. engagement in the years following 9/11.

Overall, these events show that, despite being the sole superpower following the Cold War, the United States had considerable constraints in dictating regional outcomes in South Asia. The limitations of US strategy in South Asia throughout the 1990s were due to strong regional rivalries, nuclear deterrence logic, internal dynamics in Afghanistan, and the inherent restrictions of superpower influence in a complex regional setting.

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