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**The United States, India, and Pakistan:  
Retrospect and Prospect**

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# **The United States, India, and Pakistan: Retrospect and Prospect**

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Dr. Cohen has written, co-authored, or edited eight books. These include *The Pakistan Army*, *The Indian Army* (revised edition, 1990), the co-authored *Brasstacks and Beyond: Perception and Management of Crisis in South Asia* (1995), and *India: Emergent Power?*. Edited books include *Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia* (1990) and *South Asia after the Cold War: International Perspectives* (1993). Work in progress includes a revision of his book *The Pakistan Army* and a major monograph contrasting regional and non-regional perceptions of South Asian security issues (*Every Fifth Person: Perceptions of War and Peace in South Asia*).





# The United States, India, and Pakistan: Retrospect and Prospect

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*Stephen Philip Cohen*

## Introduction

It is tempting, but over simple, to divide fifty years of U.S. relations with India and Pakistan into two periods: the Cold War, extending from 1947–89, and the post-Cold War years, from 1990 to the present. This division is misleading for four reasons.

First, U.S. differences with India—in the shape of the Indian nationalist movement—actually began *before* independence as they took dissimilar positions on the great war against Nazism and Japanese imperialism. This strategic divergence helped establish patterns and habits on both sides that persist today. Second, Washington's Cold War-derived interest in India and Pakistan waxed and waned; there were long stretches of apathy as well as the intermittent vigorous pursuit of *non*-Cold War issues (for example, Jimmy Carter's introduction, in the late 1970s, of nuclear nonproliferation as a central element of U.S. relations with both states). There were even occasions when Cold War objectives were supplanted by other regional issues (as from 1965 onward when the United States and the Soviet Union tacitly, and then explicitly coordinated elements of their respective South Asian policies—even when they were battling each other in Afghanistan). Third, Washington's Cold War interests were themselves very complex, most notably as the object of containment policy came to *include* China (after 1949), and then *excluded* it (after 1970). Finally, U.S. policy makers are bedeviled now, as they were during the entire Cold War period, by the difficulty of formulating a policy toward either India or Pakistan when these states appear to be locked in conflict with each other.

These strategic considerations of alliance, containment and balance of power have been difficult enough for U.S. policy makers to comprehend, and even more difficult to manage. However, Washington also had to address many other concerns. These include the democratization of South Asia (at the present moment more than half of the world's citizens living under democratic rule are to be found in South Asia), the massive growth of narcotics production in and adjacent to South Asia, expanding trade and investment opportunities, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and most recently, the concerns of nearly a million Americans of South Asian origin—a factor that has begun to shape the process by which the United States makes its South Asia policy.

This chapter will summarize the major objectives pursued by successive generations of U.S. policy makers toward India and Pakistan during and immediately after the Cold War. A chronological overview that traces U.S. interests, policies, and attitudes for more than five decades is presented in Appendix II, Tables 1A and 1B. Our more important objective is to see how the United States managed competing demands and countervailing frustrations during those years. This is not merely an historical exercise: there are important lessons to be learned from the way in which others pursued varied strategic, economic and ideological objectives, many of which remain with us today. We conclude by noting recent developments, including efforts to construct a policy that will do justice to the wide range of U.S. interests that remain embedded in South Asia.

## Fifty-Five Years of U.S. Policy

### Before The Cold War

Any survey of U.S. relations with India and Pakistan must, ironically, begin five years before their independence in 1942, when the United States first discovered a significant strategic stake in the Indian subcontinent. Until then U.S. interest in British India was diffuse, but tended to be supportive of independence (or greater Indian self-rule). This view stemmed from a Wilsonian belief that independence was morally appropriate and that it would

help the region move more speedily toward the alleviation of poverty (the most articulate and visible dissenter from this position was Katherine Mayo, whose views toward Mahatma Gandhi and other Congress leaders grew progressively more hostile and influential in the 1930s). There were limited commercial and missionary interests in India, although neither compared with the far more substantial human and material investment in China.

The critical turning point in U.S. policy, which anticipated later India–U.S. disputes, was precipitated by the decision, in the summer of 1942, of the Indian National Congress to go to prison rather than actively support the war effort. This, plus the support given to the Axis powers by Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army, forced the Roosevelt administration into a choice between an ally and a potential friend. Roosevelt ceased pressuring the British to grant independence, a choice that disillusioned many Indian nationalists—and one that prefigured later disappointments when Washington was forced to choose among other allies and a nonaligned India.

### **The Cold War: A Cluster of Strategies**

The onset of the Cold War brought the United States back to South Asia in search of allies (or at least friends) in another struggle against a global threat. The “loss” of China in 1949 accelerated the search, as did the discovery that the Soviet Union was catching up in the nuclear arms race, and the consolidation of Soviet power in central as well as Eastern Europe.

An inventory of U.S. “Cold War” involvement in South Asia from 1949–89 would count at least six different themes. Over the years these sometimes weakened, often to reemerge five, ten, or twenty years later:

- The Cold War led the United States to think once again about the strategic defense of the region. South Asia had come under attack by Japanese ground and naval forces in WWII—did it face the same kind of threat from Soviet, and later Chinese, forces? The United States’ early containment policy, as implemented in South Asia, was to help India and Pakistan *defend against* Soviet and Chinese forces. Although their motive was to obtain arms for their own dispute, both Indian and Pakistani officials stressed to Americans the risk that the subcontinent faced from the “bear” to the north. Ultimately Pakistan was the recipient of significant military, economic, and grant programs especially from 1954–65.<sup>1</sup> During those years nonaligned India received considerably more in economic loans and grants, purchased about \$55 million in military equipment from the United States, and \$90 million in military grant assistance after the India–China war of 1962.<sup>2</sup> The “second” Cold War, precipitated by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, revived the long-moribund U.S.–Pakistan military relationship, and Pakistan received more than \$7 billion in loans and credits for military and economic assistance until the program was terminated when the Bush administration concluded (in 1990) that Pakistan’s covert nuclear weapons program violated U.S. law.<sup>3</sup>
- The Cold War in South Asia also had a domestic front. As the internal vulnerabilities of Pakistan and India became more evident (especially in light of the Comintern’s 1949 call for revolutionary uprisings throughout the world), Washington mounted a variety of developmental, intelligence and information programs in South Asia. The Indian communists were seen to be under the influence of the Soviet Union, and the United States provided huge amounts of food aid, advice on land reform, and cooperated with Indian and Pakistani governments in countering their communist parties (Pakistan banned its communist party; the Congress party worked with the CIA in Kerala and West Bengal, two communist strongholds in India). The logic of these programs was based on an assumed correlation between poverty and susceptibility to communism: by encouraging economic growth (and redistributive policies such as land reform) the communists could be beaten at their own game, and democracy would have a chance even in the poorest regions of India and Pakistan. Very substantial information/propaganda campaigns were also developed, balancing the much larger Soviet operations. Although this ideological cold war peaked in the 1950s and

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1. This included \$630 million in grant military assistance for weapons, \$619 for defense support assistance (construction of facilities, and salary support for designated units), and \$55 million worth of equipment purchased on a cash or concessional basis.

2. The amount might have been much greater had John F. Kennedy, who was very pro-Indian, not been assassinated. Many of the Indian (and Pakistani) loans, especially those that enabled these countries to buy U.S. grain, were to be paid back in rupees, and large amounts were subsequently written off.

3. While there was no military grant component to this assistance program, much of the economic assistance was in fact used to pay back the loans taken to buy hardware. Overall, the economic component of the two packages (1981–87 and 1987–90) was slightly larger than the military.

1960s, Washington was, as late as the mid-1980s, still actively countering Soviet disinformation programs directed toward Indian journalists and politicians.

- The Cold War intermittently made India or Pakistan major prizes in their own right. Despite the poverty of the region (or perhaps because of it), many in the United States argued that the “real” contest in Asia was between communist China and democratic India. Imitating Leninist logic (that the vulnerability of the metropolitan country lay in its colonies), India was seen by some as a pivotal battleground in the Cold War. The most extreme example of this argument was expounded by Walt W. Rostow who justified the American intervention in Vietnam on the grounds that if Communist aggression succeeded there, then Cambodia, Thailand, and ultimately India, the most important of all of the dominoes, would fall to the communists. (It came as something of a surprise to Indian diplomats to learn that their country was the reason for U.S. intervention in Vietnam). In the 1980s during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, it was frequently heard in Washington (more than in Islamabad) that Pakistan was a “front-line” state, and that if Afghanistan fell, Pakistan—and all of South Asia—would be vulnerable and the Soviets would have a clear run to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

Over time the Cold War, in its South Asian manifestation, acquired other dimensions, and India and Pakistan themselves came to take advantage of the global bipolar structure:

- Although Indian diplomats were among the first to learn of the Sino-Soviet split, it was Pakistan that exploited the crack in the communist monolith by helping to arrange the secret visit of Henry Kissinger to Beijing in 1970, leading to improved U.S. ties with China.
- While at first India’s role as a cofounder and leader of the nonaligned movement was seen in Cold War terms (John Foster Dulles once criticized Indian “neutrality” as immoral), the ultimate view of all U.S. presidents from Truman to Lyndon Johnson (including Dwight Eisenhower himself), was that India could be used to influence the nonaligned movement and that a nonaligned India did little damage to substantive American interests.
- Finally, as the Cold War wound down, Washington’s relations with New Delhi and Islamabad came to be quite permissive as far as their movement *toward* China or the Soviet Union. At the height of the “second” Cold War in 1980–89, the United States did not try to punish India for its close relationship with the Soviet Union, but rather attempted what was termed an “opening” to New Delhi in the hope of luring India away from the Soviets *and* protecting Pakistan’s southern flank. Nor did Washington worry overmuch about Islamabad’s continuing diplomatic and economic links to Moscow, despite the savage war being waged, by proxy, in Afghanistan.

Thus the United States’ Cold War strategic engagement with India and Pakistan was quite varied and complex. While there was a formal alliance with Pakistan, this did not rule out a close intelligence relationship with India (India’s major external intelligence agency, Research Analysis Wing, was begun with Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) advice and support) and large amounts of economic aid to both countries.

### **Reciprocal Fears: Overcommitment and Betrayal**

The most contentious issue that dogged U.S. relations with India and Pakistan over the years was the extent of U.S. obligations to either state and the implications for its relations with the other. This remains, today, a lively issue, transcending its Cold War roots.

Formally, the only U.S. commitments in the region were to Pakistan, should it be faced with “communist” aggression. The United States was obliged only to consult if Pakistan were faced by other aggression.

However, informal assurances and transitory arrangements have been common, and these have frequently given rise to serious miscalculation, especially when accompanied by military assistance or military gestures.

From a U.S. perspective the greatest fear has been overcommitment: being dragged into a purely regional crisis by India or Pakistan, when no U.S. interests were at stake. The first such crisis was the India–China war, when Nehru frantically called for direct U.S. military intervention to help turn back the tide of Chinese soldiers. The U.S. response was to send the *USS Enterprise* into the Bay of Bengal as a warning to the Chinese, and to discuss a long-term military and arms buildup contingent upon movement on the Kashmir problem.

Ironically, the same carrier was in 1971 sent toward the Bay of Bengal (it never quite entered it) as a way of reassuring *Pakistan* (and China, Pakistan’s new ally) of U.S. support and opposition to the impending

occupation of East Pakistan by *Indian* forces. Again, the signal was only a signal: Indian forces defeated the Pakistan army and a new state, Bangladesh, was created.

Every American military assistance program in South Asia has generated strong, even vehement objections from the non-recipient. The United States' initial program for Pakistan (1954) provided India with the pretext to back away from its pledge of a plebiscite in Kashmir, and encouraged Delhi's move toward Moscow. Subsequent U.S. assistance to India immediately after the 1962 India–China war led Pakistan to move toward China and to question the value of its ties to the United States. The revival of the U.S.–Pakistan military relationship in the 1980s propelled India toward the Soviet Union and contributed to the largest arms buying spree in regional history.

United States policy makers have been confronted with the same Hobson's choice in the nuclear arena. The United States' initial reluctance to come down hard on New Delhi for its 1974 nuclear test was taken as further justification for Pakistan's own nuclear program. Conversely, when Washington looked the other way while Pakistan perfected its nuclear program in the 1980s, Indian hawks argued that an Indian nuclear test would be a fitting response, if only to disrupt the U.S.–Pakistan relationship by forcing Pakistan to conduct a test of its own.

### The Lessons of the Cold War

What strategic lessons can be drawn from the U.S. pursuit of Cold War objectives in South Asia?

First, South Asia came to be seen by two generations of U.S. policy makers as a region of strife, war, and intractable conflict. The absence of cooperation between India and Pakistan made the region vulnerable to outsiders and made it hard for the United States to work with either state to pursue common strategic objectives in or out of the region.

Second, the United States came to the view that their well-intentioned offers of mediation or conflict resolution were seldom welcomed by both sides and almost never accepted except under duress. In this regard no issue was more important, and more frustrating, than Kashmir. From the first year of independence (and the emergence of Kashmir as the core dispute between India and Pakistan) U.S. officials, private citizens, foundations, and scholars have pressed the two states to resolve, or at least suspend, the conflict so that they might better manage the joint defense of the Subcontinent and stop the diversion of scarce resources away from urgent economic and developmental needs. An enormous amount of U.S. political capital was expended on Kashmir with few positive results.

Third, because of the inability to put together what partition had torn apart—South Asia's strategic unity—U.S. administrations often toyed with the idea of choosing *between* India and Pakistan to help contain the Soviet Union or China (or at times, both). This view held that the value of an alliance with either India or Pakistan against a third, non-regional state would be greater than the costs incurred by choosing one or the other and that the United States could reduce collateral regional political damage by compensatory economic or military aid programs. However, Washington never could bring itself to make such a choice and stick with it. When the United States leaned to one side there usually was a compensatory movement in the other direction. Thus U.S. economic assistance to India peaked at the very moment the U.S. military assistance program to Pakistan was in full swing; later, when U.S. military equipment began to flow to India, compensatory military hardware was supplied to Pakistan. Time and again a movement toward one or the other country was partially balanced by programs with the other.

Fourth, even this policy lapsed from time to time. There were long periods when South Asia simply vanished from the U.S. strategic map and apathy, rather than engagement, was the norm. The United States was uninterested in South Asia (and resisted offers of alignment from both India and Pakistan) very early in the Cold War. It took the victory of the Communist Chinese and a threatening Stalin to tip the balance of opinion in Washington in favor of an alliance with Pakistan. But by 1964 Washington had become disillusioned with both Islamabad and New Delhi, and seized the opportunity presented by the 1965 India–Pakistan war to stop military aid to both countries and to yield the role of regional conflict manager to the Soviet Union. After a brief spell of

activity in 1970–71, Washington again retreated from the region, only to return after the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December, 1979.

Fifth, as far as South Asia was concerned, it took a crisis to build a policy—or at least to rouse U.S. strategic interest. Absent a crisis (either a threat to the region by an outside power, or a threat to regional stability brought about by an India–Pakistan war), U.S. officials tended to regard South Asia as a strategic sideshow. While it may have been the *site* of Cold War competition, it was not consistently judged to be vital territory—at least compared with the oil-rich Middle East, or an industrially vital Europe and northeast Asia.

Finally, U.S. officials and strategists came to their own understanding of the region’s strategic style—the way in which Indian and Pakistan diplomats set forth their respective positions in the Cold War. The United States grew wary of Pakistan’s exaggeration of the Indian threat to “Western” and U.S. interests, and came to heavily discount Islamabad’s pronouncements of the communist threat from the north. Pakistanis had been saying that “the sky was falling” for forty years, and there was, as of 1978, no evidence that it was going to happen. This fateful U.S. miscalculation gave Islamabad considerable leverage in its dealings with Washington after the Soviet Union occupied Kabul on Christmas day 1979. Today Pakistan is widely (if inaccurately) regarded in Congress and sections of the Executive Branch as a trusted and loyal U.S. ally during the Cold War. As for India, successive generations of U.S. officials have been driven to distraction by New Delhi’s strategic style: for many years it seemed that no Indian diplomat’s day was complete unless he or she had lectured an American on the evils of the Cold War and the self-evident foolishness of the United States supporting Pakistan against India. Thus, when the Cold War came to an end, Pakistan found itself with a considerable group of friends and supporters in Washington ( a position it did not have ten years earlier), and India was widely regarded as pro-Soviet, a bit anti-United States, and having betrayed its own lofty Nehruvian-Gandhian standards on nuclear and related issues.

### **Outside the Cold War: Economic Political and Ideological Considerations**

The U.S. strategic and military policies in South Asia described above intersected at many points with concern over the region’s economic and political development. The latter may turn out to be of historically equal or greater importance. These economic and social concerns had two wellsprings (1) a deep moral concern with South Asia’s poverty, and (2) the need for economic and social reform to keep the region from slipping into the communist camp. A third U.S. economic interest is now emerging after decades of disappointment—South Asia as a prospective area for U.S. investment and as a market for U.S. products.

Official U.S. interest in the social and economic problems of South Asia actually predated the Cold War, emerging at the very moment during WWII when the region became strategically important. The first, and most extensive, U.S. exposure to South Asia took place when thousands of impressionable U.S. soldiers and civilians bound for the China–Burma–India (CBI) theater went to eastern India in 1943. India was then reeling under the impact of the Bengal Famine of 1943 and was threatened by a Japanese invasion. Many of these young Americans later contrasted their experience in India with the warm welcome they received in China, where Americans worked closely with all elements of the anti-Japanese alliance. Both countries suffered from terrible poverty, but the Chinese seemed to be more eager to cooperate militarily with their U.S. allies.

By default, India’s poverty moved to the forefront of U.S. interests in South Asia. If India, in particular, would not join any U.S.-sponsored alliances, then the United States could at least help India indirectly, through economic and developmental projects.

This strategy fit into mainstream U.S. thinking. Many liberal Americans held that high levels of defense spending by poor states was somehow immoral. It also coincided with the observation that *because* India and Pakistan were poor, they had a special obligation to resolve their disputes, and that the United States should play a useful role in facilitating dialogue. Further, many Americans were especially attracted to India because Jawaharlal Nehru and other Indian leaders were critical of the waste of the Cold War, with its never-ending cycle of arms races and huge expenditures on nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (this later led to disillusionment with India among many U.S. liberals who regarded the Indian nuclear test of 1974 as a morally appalling betrayal of once shared values).

Americans have generally held the view that (unlike East Asia or the Middle East, where there were real strategic stakes) South Asia was first and foremost an economic and social “project”. They found it difficult to take India seriously as a major power because of its obvious economic weakness. In the 1950s and even the 1960s most Americans were telling their Indian counterparts to “grow more food and fewer children”: India might be an “emerging” power but it would not be a real power until it put its own economic and social house in order.

In the 1950s and 1960s this view not only contributed to U.S. efforts to get India and Pakistan to the bargaining table to settle the Kashmir problem, it helped build support for massive food and economic assistance to India and Pakistan. These were expanded to include the transfer of modern agricultural technology, that in turn paved the way for India’s Green and White Revolutions (in grain and dairy production, respectively). It also led to the establishment of South Asian studies programs at many of the U.S. universities that had developed a strong stake in India and Pakistan (most importantly the state universities of Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin).

These developmental programs were usually justified in Cold War terms, but they were not solely the result of *realpolitik*: they had humanitarian motives that resonated deeply. They were the extension of the U.S. impulse to do good and share U.S. wealth with less fortunate people. They have been derided as misguided, patronizing, or unwise, and the U.S. scholars who found their intellectual homes in India and Pakistan have been labeled as academic imperialists; but a review of these programs—sponsored by hundreds of private groups, foundations, universities, as well as official U.S. aid and developmental agencies—would reach a net positive assessment.

Although individual U.S. institutions and individuals had remarkable access to the highest levels of Indian and Pakistani decision makers,<sup>4</sup> U.S. capability to impose economic reforms upon India and Pakistan was limited. The U.S.-brokered Indus Water treaty of 1960 was publicly disparaged (although privately welcomed) in both India and Pakistan. Only one President, Lyndon Johnson, tried to force India to change its economic policy by a “ship to mouth” strategy that only triggered off a strong backlash by Indira Gandhi who felt that Indian sovereignty was under attack. Jimmy Carter did make an offer of massive aid for an Eastern waters regional development program, but his real priority for was nonproliferation, and the proposal was never seriously considered by regional states. Throughout much of the Cold War era U.S. officials were critical of the buildup of massive state-controlled industries in India, but were reluctant, and in some cases legally prohibited, from supporting inefficient and “socialist” state-run enterprises.

Only since 1990 and the transformation in Indian economic policy, has U.S. private investment begun to take India seriously. This, in turn, opens up possibilities that were unimaginable ten or twenty, let alone fifty years ago. There is, for the first time (even if twenty-five years too late), the possibility of real economic interdependence between the United States and India and Pakistan. The economic benefits of this interdependence are obvious, but the political ones are no less important: a strong economic relationship between the United States and both South Asian states will provide an incentive to manage other issues more carefully. It may be premature for Indians to envision the kind of reverse dependency relationship that China has achieved with the United States, but even a limited expansion of economic ties has changed the context in which contentious political and strategic issues are discussed.

For the first time since Americans came into contact with South Asia the region is seen as other than poor and wretched. While there is considerable exaggeration of the vast middle class Indian market, U.S. firms understand the advantages of South Asia as a production site as well as a place to sell goods, and this new perception has rippled through the bureaucracy and Congress. U.S. corporations now actively lobby Congress for legislation favorable to the region, although they are reluctant to side with India or Pakistan on contentious issues (such as the Brown amendment) when it means criticizing the other country—where they might have important economic interests.

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4. The Ford Foundation’s New Delhi representative in the 1950s could see Nehru at will, and influenced Indian land reform policies (his counterpart in Pakistan was far less successful).

### Nonproliferation: Right Issue, Wrong Region?

Timing is important in determining which issues achieve high priority and which are relegated to the back burner. The balance of U.S. policy in South Asia was dramatically tilted in the early 1990s toward a single issue, nuclear nonproliferation. Had the economic reforms described above taken place earlier, it is possible that proliferation would not have assumed the importance it has had for the last six years.

The groundwork for the subordination of U.S. regional policy to nonproliferation concerns was established in 1974, when, stimulated by the Indian nuclear test, the United States came to believe that the world was on the edge of a rapid burst of nuclear proliferation. Jimmy Carter made nonproliferation the centerpiece of his foreign policy (until the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan) and singled out South Asia as a particularly important target.

In the 1980s nonproliferation ranks were swollen by the suspicion that the Reagan administration had failed to apply credible sanctions to Islamabad's covert nuclear program. Ironically, virtually no nonproliferationist was willing to provide Pakistan with the kind of ironclad security guarantees or military equipment that would have made its program unnecessary.

Finally, there were a series of intelligence misjudgments that gave the impression that South Asia had joined the company of such states as Libya, Iran, Iraq, and North Korea. After Washington underestimated, in 1987, the severity of the "Brasstacks" crisis, the intelligence community has since exaggerated the crises of 1990, 1992, and 1993 and the risk that India-Pakistan tensions might lead to conventional or nuclear war.<sup>5</sup> By the early 1990s many in Washington felt that South Asia was out of control. The chain of assumptions (widely held in official circles) was that a war over Kashmir was likely, that this would lead to conventional war, and this, in turn, could light a nuclear conflagration between India and Pakistan. Further, there was also a strong disposition for the United States to assume the leadership role in heading off this chain of events. The United States was thought to have the best intelligence on these sensitive issues and it was thought to have the greatest leverage over India and Pakistan. All of this suggested a mandate to contain the two South Asian nuclear programs.

This mandate was bipartisan in its ideological coloration, as was the larger focus on nonproliferation policy. This was the offspring of a liaison among strategic conservatives (who wanted to make the world safe for U.S. nuclear weapons) and liberals (who wanted to get rid of all nuclear weapons, and who thought that other countries would be more susceptible to pressure than the Department of Defense).

The nonproliferation coalition had earlier succeeded in embedding into law many constraints on the conduct of U.S. policy. These apply to all potential proliferators, even though they are less than effective in the case of states that believe their very survival is dependent upon nuclear weapons or the maintenance of a nuclear option. Pakistan is not going to trade this option for five or six airplanes.

The fact that India and Pakistan were the only near nuclear or covertly nuclear states with whom the United States could have a dialogue, also explains much of the heightened interest in the region at the time. U.S. officials could, and frequently did, travel to Islamabad and New Delhi to lecture their counterparts on the perils of nuclear weapons—they were unable or unwilling to do so in Teheran, Pyongyang, or Jerusalem. So India and Pakistan received a disproportionate amount of official and unofficial attention aimed at "capping, freezing, and rolling back" the regional nuclear programs, very little of it addressed to the motives and causes of these nuclear programs. In this respect, the failure of the United States to take seriously, or even respond to, the 1987 "Rajiv Gandhi initiative" on regional and global disarmament when it was initially proposed, or when it was revived in 1992, was an egregious error, reflecting the assumption that Washington knew better than India (or Pakistan) what was right in the area of nuclear disarmament. (The Indians were to pay Washington back in kind several years later when they withstood pressure to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) extension treaty,

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5. For examples of this see the testimony of the Director of the Central Intelligence Agency, R. James Woolsey, before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, "Nomination of R. James Woolsey, Hearing," 103rd Congress, First Session (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993); and the exaggerated analysis by William E. Burrows and Robert Windrem in their *Critical Mass: The Dangerous Race for a Superweapon in a Fragmented World* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994).

and opposed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)). The Rajiv initiative was one of several missed opportunities to engage the Indians on one of their central objections to the NPT, and to work out an alternative formulation that might have obtained their limited adherence to the NPT (and subsequently, the CTBT) even if they did not formally sign it. However Washington was uninterested in compromise, and did not in any case take the Indian position seriously. A senior White House official in the first Clinton administration once explained to several members of an Asia Society study group that he would rather have India and Pakistan in the NPT but violating it, than outside the NPT and adhering to it.

There are fortunately signs that this proliferation-first policy is itself giving way to a more nuanced U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan. Before addressing this prospect, a few comments are in order on the way in which the United States makes its South Asia policy, because there was an expectation in 1992 that bureaucratic reorganization would improve both the substance and the implementation of U.S. South Asia policy.

### **Organizational Imperatives**

Four years ago the Department of State was required by Congress to detach South Asia from the Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs (NEA) and establish a separate bureau for the region. Historically South Asia had been a subordinate component of NEA and was looked after by a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State (only one past NEA Assistant Secretary of State, Philip Talbot, was a genuine South Asian expert). The arrangement was defended in the bureaucracy on the grounds that an Assistant Secretary could always raise South Asian issues in meetings with higher officials when he went to discuss “more important” issues such as the Arab-Israeli peace process, Gulf policy, or relations with Iran. Congress anticipated that the new South Asian bureau, headed by its own Assistant Secretary, would raise the profile of South Asia within the government, that it would engage in long-term strategic planning, and that it would better be able to push a policy through the bureaucracy if it was headed by a more senior official.

As things turned out the new bureau was in difficulty from its birth. It received little support from the State Department bureaucracy (that had opposed its creation); it lost its chief advocate in Congress (Congressman Stephen Solarz); most senior Clinton officials knew little and cared less about South Asia, seeing it only as a suitable target for the prosecution of a tough nonproliferation policy; and finally, other departments never adjusted their own organizational charts to create separate South Asia bureaus. In this respect, the National Security Council was most culpable. Only the White House can blend military, economic, political, strategic, ideological, and other interests, demanding that individual departments follow an integrated national strategy.<sup>6</sup> No overall South Asia strategy was ever developed in the first Clinton administration and nonproliferation issues dominated the U.S.–South Asia discourse. The process was filled with people who had little or no experience in the region whose primary interest was India’s and Pakistan’s adherence to proliferation-related treaties.

The one bright spot was the strong interest in South Asia by the Departments of Defense, Commerce, and Energy. Defense, even though it had its own “counterproliferation” objectives, recognized India’s military and naval potential, and tried to retain its ties to the Pakistan army. The Department of Commerce, led by Secretary Ron Brown, identified India as one of the BEMs (Big Emerging Markets), and encouraged visits to the region by corporate and government officials. The Department of Energy managed to work around legal restrictions on discussions with India concerning nuclear safety and pursued a wide-ranging dialogue with Indian and Pakistani counterparts on energy and environmental issues. But these departments cannot develop or formulate a national strategy, they can only function within the constraints of that strategy.

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6. One of the most important recommendations of the Council report is that a senior National Security Council official be given full-time responsibility for South Asia.



## Making South Asia Relevant

### Starting Over

In the past five years, while the Clinton administration seemed to be stuck on nuclear issues, there appeared a number of U.S. studies of the future relationship between the United States and India and Pakistan. Most of these reports identified certain common features:

- First, South Asia has been under-appreciated. Both the recent Asia Society and Council on Foreign Relations reports note that South Asia contains more than one fifth of the world's population, that it holds the largest number of people living under democratic conditions, that the Indian and Pakistani economies are potential major markets, that regional instability (including the possibility of nuclear war) demands U.S. attention and concern, and that India and Pakistan might, in the future, play a major strategic role to the west (in the Persian Gulf), the north (Central Asia), and the east (Southeast Asia).
- Second, these studies all argued that the number and importance of U.S. strategic, economic, and ideological interests embedded in South Asia are not matched by attention given to the area, especially to South Asia's largest power, India. All of them suggest a new look at the region, and some of them offer quite specific steps that might be taken to remedy the situation.

However, with a few exceptions, the more specific the proposal, the greater the disagreement among the U.S. regional and strategic specialists who have signed or written these reports. They differ strikingly in their recommendations concerning such issues as nuclear proliferation, a strategic relationship with New Delhi, and American intervention to help settle the Kashmir problem. Should the United States abandon its proliferation objectives in the region, or should it increase pressure on India and Pakistan? Should it seek an alliance with India to help counter growing Chinese influence (risking its relationship with Pakistan)? Would greater U.S. involvement in Kashmir make it *less* likely that other objectives can be achieved? Any five U.S. experts on South Asia will offer six different recommendations.

These and other differences in U.S. policies suggests a larger issue: the difficulty of formulating a policy (or policies) toward a region where there are genuine U.S. interests, but none of them vital. Can the United States organize itself to deal with the one fifth of the world that is *not* a threat to U.S. security, that does *not* show signs of calamitous collapse, that has not yet (and is unlikely to become) a major economic partner, and that persists in expanding a political ideology that is *not* hostile to U.S. values? When a country—the United States—has been engaged in a global struggle against totalitarianism for two generations—from 1942–90—it is hard to mobilize American policy makers, let alone Congress, around a non-threat to strategic, political, economic, and moral interests. During the Cold War, the United States accomplished many useful things in South Asia but the rationalization of the Cold War was always available to policy makers; a threat, real or potential, could always be conjured up in the service of an otherwise worthwhile objective. The discipline imposed by a geopolitical framework—even a flawed one—forced U.S. policy makers to treat the region as a whole. This has not been apparent since 1989–90. Paradoxically, the absence today of a threat to South Asia, or to the United States from South Asia, makes it difficult to persuade the policy and legislative communities to support a policy in which real, but limited, U.S. interests are advanced.

### A Glimpse of the Future?

The contours of a U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan can be vaguely discerned, although it remains unclear as to whether the second Clinton administration or its successor will address South Asia with anything like the attention it received during much of the Cold War.

A sound U.S. policy must meet several criteria. First, it must devote *proportionate* attention to the U.S. diverse interests in South Asia. South Asia should not be moved to the top of the U.S. foreign policy agenda, but neither should it languish as a policy backwater. Policy makers, the press, legislators, and even academics must resist the temptation of rushing to respond to the latest regional crisis, and completely ignoring important, although secondary, long term interests. Second, it must be realistic, which means that it must be achievable with available resources. Third, such a policy must be (and can be) low cost; South Asia does not need elaborate

aid programs, risky military commitments, or the diversion of significant U.S. resources—except the scarcest resource of all, the serious attention of senior policy makers and Congress.

With these criteria in mind, the following cluster of policy goals seem to meet these criteria. They also have the advantage of being internally self-reinforcing—that is, progress in one area can lead to movement in another. Indeed, U.S. policy should be seen as advancing along a broad front: pressing too hard on a single issue will be detrimental to other important interests, and in the end could be self-defeating.

A new American policy in south Asia will have to emerge from the confluence of five different interest clusters:

The first is the encouragement of the process of economic liberalization, which has provided (in the words of the Asia Society study group) a new “ballast” for U.S. relations with India and Pakistan. Market reform, tariff reduction, the elimination of state subsidies for inefficient industries, and the promotion of regional free trade zones are all policies that are in U.S. interests—and those of India and Pakistan. However, as democracies, India and Pakistan are especially sensitive to distortions and inequalities generated by uneven economic growth. U.S. policy makers, corporations, and investors must be sensitive to the fact that growth without social justice will be politically unacceptable in lively, multi-party democracies. A rising tide raises all boats, but in the real world some boats rise sooner than others, and no emotion is more politically explosive than envy.

Second, the United States should continue its encouragement and strengthening of democratic institutions in India and Pakistan. Quite apart from the intrinsic moral value of democratization, this has three important byproducts.

- A democratic India and Pakistan are less likely to engage in human rights violations, and will be more sensitive to international criticism in this area.
- A democratic India, and democratizing Pakistan are not only more compatible with the further movement toward market reforms, but will be sensitive to the abuses that market systems can produce. Elections are powerful ways of ensuring that economic growth will be equitable, both geographically and in terms of social class and rural-urban divisions.
- Democratic states are less likely to go to war than nondemocracies. Over time, mature democracies develop political, cultural, and economic links that increase their interdependence and influence the gain-loss calculation regarding the use of force. No politicians in South Asia understand this better than the current Indian and Pakistani prime ministers, Inder K. Gujral and Nawaz Sharif.

America’s third and fourth regional goals should be to promote strategic normalization between New Delhi and Islamabad and assist them in managing their de facto possession of nuclear weapons. The former is an old objective of the United States, but still a worthy one. However change will not come quickly. All unstable or weak democracies find it difficult to accommodate each other on Kashmir (or even Siachin); a process of internal debate and dialogue will have to proceed in both states. Thus the United States should not press for a quick “solution” to the Kashmir problem, but help create the conditions under which such a solution, satisfactory to a wide range of the political community in both countries, can emerge. Further, strategic normalization has consequences for U.S. concerns over the spread of nuclear weapons in South Asia. The anti-proliferationists may be correct in their assessment of the disruptive role of nuclear weapons elsewhere, but in South Asia they provide Pakistan with the confidence to deal with India and for India they are an additional incentive to normalize its ties with Pakistan. It is unlikely that Pakistan or India will give up nuclear weapons in the next ten years, but a realistic goal would be to create the conditions in which neither sees any gain in moving their programs forward. Any U.S. legislation that hampers Washington’s ability to maintain the present situation needs to be reexamined—we have let the best become the enemy of the good.

A fifth major foreign policy goal should be to develop a dialogue about short-term and long-term strategic cooperation with India and Pakistan. There is no such dialogue at the present moment (although the Department of Defense, in its quite independent policy toward South Asia, has tried to begin one). There are contingencies, immediate and distant, that need to be discussed. In the short run India and Pakistan may be able to expand their peacekeeping and stabilizing role in regions adjacent to South Asia. In the long run the emergence of China as an aggressive power could raise profound issues for all three states. Pakistan would have to decide whether its quasi-alliance with China might not drag it into conflicts for which it was ill-equipped; India, also must decide

whether it is easier to wean a totalitarian, powerful China away from Pakistan, or whether it is better to attempt to wean a newly democratic Pakistan away from China. Finally a violent, or expansionist China may not pose the same kind of threat to India and the United States at the same time—would New Delhi allow itself to be used as a “front-line state” against China, or would the United States be willing to come to India’s assistance in the event of a crisis? These are still hypothetical questions—and there is a strong possibility that they will remain hypothetical, but they need to be discussed between Americans and Indians, Americans and Pakistanis, and most importantly, between Pakistanis and Indians.

How does one get from here to there? In the past, U.S. policy toward India and Pakistan was formulated and implemented from the top down in the context of a global strategic conflict. Policy could be discussed among a fairly small circle of officials, Senators, Congressmen and “old India hands”. For most of the Cold War period South Asia attracted neither a large lobby based on ethnic origins, nor an interested business community, nor an ideologically motivated group of academics and intellectuals (these were divided along pro-Indian and pro-Pakistani lines, derived largely from their initial regional exposure). Except for brief periods (as when U.S. arms were delivered to Pakistan during the height of the Bangladesh crisis, or during the Indian “Emergency” of 1975) the region never attracted the passions associated with U.S. China policy, its actions in Central and Latin America, or the Southeast Asian intervention.

Now there is less interest at the top, but a growing activism at the grass roots. Human rights groups find South Asia especially interesting because they can readily visit the somewhat less than perfect democracies in the region; U.S. business and investment communities, uneasy about their investments in China, have doubled and tripled investment in India during the past five years; there are now active, affluent “ethnic” lobbies, of Americans of Pakistani and Indian origin, with a presence in nearly every Congressional district, eager to influence policy that affect their former homelands. And, of course, traditional concerns with strategic cooperation, the spread of nuclear weapons, and other “high” policy issues continue as before.

While U.S. interests in South Asia are now more diverse than during the Cold War, the policy process has not adapted to the management of this complexity. Because there can be no return to the overarching framework that characterized U.S. policy during the Cold War years, the process has to begin at the other end: the development of coalitions among and among various groups and interests that regard South Asia as important.

The expansion of the policy process, and the growing diversification of U.S. regional entanglements, should not, in a democracy, be seen as a negative development. Lobbying has the consequence of expanding regional interest across the ideological spectrum and educating otherwise uninterested politicians and bureaucrats. With the democratization of Pakistan, and the liberalization of the economies of both India and Pakistan (and the strategic stalemate brought about by their respective nuclear “options”) the terms of the debate between the two countries has moved to a higher, more secure, and more democratic plateau. This will soon be reflected in the degree of cooperation between Indian and Pakistani officials and lobbying groups on issues where they have a shared interest (immigration, U.S. trade and investment policy, high level visits, global trade policies, human rights concerns, and containing the regional arms races), all interests shared by many Americans.

An objective assessment of the importance of India and Pakistan over the next decade will see it as less a threat than as a region where there is a significant opportunity to advance important, diverse, and positive U.S. interests. The immediate challenge to U.S. policy in South Asia in the post Cold War period will be to stay ahead rather than trail behind these generally positive trends.



## Appendix I: Suggested Further Reading

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1. *South Asia and the United States After the Cold War, Report of a Study Mission* (New York: The Asia Society, 1994)
2. *Preventing Nuclear Proliferation in South Asia, Report of a Study Group* (New York: The Asia Society, 1995).
3. Kanti P. Bajpai and Stephen P. Cohen, eds., *South Asia After the Cold War* (Boulder: Westview, 1993)
4. William Barnds, *India, Pakistan, and the Great Powers* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972).
5. *India and America after the Cold War: Report of a Study Group* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993).
6. P. R. Chari, *Indo-Pak Nuclear Standoff: The Role of the United States* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995).
7. *A New U.S. Policy Toward India and Pakistan, Report of an Independent Task Force* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997).
8. Shivaji Ganguly, *U.S. Policy Toward South Asia* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).
9. Sumit Ganguly and Harold Gould, eds., *The Hope and the Reality: US-Indian Relations from Roosevelt to Reagan* (Boulder: Westview, 1992)
10. Dennis Kux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies, 1941–91* (Washington: National Defense University Press, 1993).
11. Dennis Kux, *Pakistan and the United States* (forthcoming).
12. Satu P. Limaye, *U.S.–Indian Relations: The Pursuit of Accommodation* (Boulder: Westview, 1993).
13. Robert J. McMahon, *The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994).
14. Peter Rodman, *More Precious than Peace: The Cold War and the Struggle for the Third World* (New York: Scribner's, 1994).
15. Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph, eds., *The Coordination of Complexity in South Asia*, studies prepared for the National Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy Appendix V, Vol. 7 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975; reprinted with new material, New Delhi: Manohar Publishers, 1978).
16. Howard Schaeffer, *Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
17. Shirin Tahir-Kheli, *India, Pakistan and the United States: Breaking with the Past* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1997).
18. Marvin Weinbaum and Chetan Kumar, eds. *South Asia Approaches the Millennium: Reexamining National Security* (Boulder: Westview, 1995)



## Appendix II: America and South Asia: A Chronological Outline

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Table 1A: American Perceptions of South Asia, 1920s–1960s

	<i>1920s–1930s</i>	<i>1940s</i>	<i>1950s–1960s</i>
Major Cause of Conflict	Recalcitrant British refuse to allow greater freedom to Indians	Massive threat to region, and world, from Axis powers	Threat to South Asia from Communism
Secondary Cause of Conflict	Poverty, lack of education	Reluctance of British to grant freedom to not-quite trustworthy Indians	Domestic communist threat because of poverty of regional states
Dominant American policy	Support Indians morally, economically and politically; press the British	Support British, politically and with substantial military investment in India	Seek real or tacit alliance with any South Asian state willing to side with the United States
Secondary American Policy	Support humanitarian and exchange programs	Keep lines open to Indian nationalists, even at the risk of angering British	Economic and developmental aid to counter domestic influence of communists
U.S. View of Regional States (or leaders)	Seen as morally superior, worthy of American support	Indian leaders are great disappointment, unrealistic, and possibly untrustworthy on larger strategic issues; Americans in CBI greatly impressed by poverty of Eastern India	Pakistani generals and Indian politicians need to achieve political stability at home and conduct dialogue with each other
View Toward US by Regional States (or leaders)	Wilsonianism of U.S. seen as model of anti-colonial state; limited private contacts with mixed results (Rockefeller and missionaries vs. Katherine Mayo)	Contradictory: disappointed at U.S. failure to force British from India, impressed by U.S. military capabilities; India and Pakistan both seek alliance	Nehruvian concern with U.S. dominance and materialism; Pakistan seeks dependency relationship
Expectation of other global powers	British will resist, but should eventually yield to moral force	In due course, the British will relent	Soviet and Chinese communists are external threats to South Asia

Table 1B: American Perceptions of South Asia, 1970s–1990s

	<i>1970s</i>	<i>1980s</i>	<i>1990s-ff.</i>
Major Cause of Conflict	No threat to region after 1965; threat is regional poverty, dictatorships	Soviets a real threat to Pakistan and thus all of South Asia	Accidental or deliberate war between India and Pakistan, with high risk of nuclear war (“most dangerous region in the world”)
Secondary Cause of Conflict	Possible acquisition of nuclear weapons (after Indian 1974 test)	Threat to India and Pakistan from each other, including nuclear proliferation	Spread <i>from</i> the region of nuclear, chemical, biological, and missiles
Dominant American policy	Region is strategically and economically marginal	Provide security assurances and military and economic assistance to Pakistan	Direct pressure on India and Pakistan to conform to international nonproliferation regimes, and sign related treaties (NPT, CTBT)
Secondary American policies	Limited economic aid programs, pressure on Indian nuclear program	Encourage India–Pakistan dialogue, economic reform, and many other issues (narcotics, human rights, proliferation)	Encourage confidence-building measures, dialogue, conflict-avoidance measures, economic reform, resolution of Kashmir “flashpoint”
View of Regional States (or leaders)	Foolish, self-centered, and destructive group, not capable of serious dialogue; Pakistanis worse than Indians	Pakistan will remain an ally, India will not provoke a war or tilt toward Soviet Union	Don’t know whether regional states are friends or threats to U.S. interests; skepticism about their domestic bona fides, also.
View of U.S. by Regional States (or leaders)	Disillusioned Pakistan becomes nonaligned and India pro-Soviet, United States seen as less relevant to regional security, irrelevant to regional economic strategies	Pakistan exploits United States on Afghanistan to protect its own nuclear program: Indian fears of U.S. tilt revived; “opening” to United States to minimize damage	U.S. obsession with nuclear issues and human rights coupled with Iraq war raises possibility of America as threat to India or Pakistan
Expectation of other global powers	Soviets a sometimes partner (Tashkent), not a threat to the region	China the ally against Soviet presence in Afghanistan, ambivalent proliferation role	Russia, Japan, People’s Republic of China, etc. partners in containing South Asian proliferation and managing regional conflict



Indian Foreign Policy (Revised Edition): Oxford India Short Introductions (Oxford India Short Introductions Series). Sumit Ganguly. 3.9 out of 5 stars 14. There are 0 reviews and 0 ratings from the United States. Top reviews from other countries. Bhanu Kethepalli. - United States 1962, started to remove its involvement in South Asia after the 2nd Indo-Pakistani conflict of 1965, United States was more focused on Vietnam. - Soviet Union negotiated an agreement between India and Pakistan in 1966, to spread its influence in the region. Prime Minister Nehru. - Closely associated the United States with the upper class of the British, during Britain's rule in India. - Had mixed feelings and contentions of the Soviet Union, personally did not like "Stalin's collectivist enterprise" but admired the industrialization program. Nehru and Non-Al India's Foreign Policy-Retrospect and prospect. Tajamul Rafi. 1\*. However educationally India and West came closer and increasing number of Indians going to England for higher studies brought better technical know-how back into the country this phase was therefore, marked by increasing awareness. In the post-first World War era India's foreign policy got real fillip when British Indian delegation was given separate representation in international conference and deliberation; this not only intensified India's global consciousness but also laid the foundation of Indian foreign policy orientation in the post independence era (Shrivastava, 2003).