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A CRITICAL HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES
AND THE REPUBLIC OF INDIA, 1947-1989

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ABSTRACT

A Critical History of Relations between the United States and the Republic of India, 1947-1989, is an attempt to answer two important questions concerning the US-Indo relationship during its first forty years. The first question asks why the relationship was so poor during the first three decades after Indian independence in 1947; The second question how the relationship improved during Ronald Reagan's presidency (1981-1989). To answer these questions, this study examines the most important periods of interaction between the two countries. It is not an exhaustive study of all that occurred during the period, but rather a critical look at how both sides handled some of the most pressing issues that arose during the first four decades after 1947.

The thesis that emerges from this investigation is that during the first three decades both sides displayed enormous failures of diplomatic competence. In some cases, the impetus for these failures was the elevation of ideological convictions above pragmatic necessity, while in others it was simply poor understanding of how best to further the relationship within the framework of each countries' respective goals. Thus, it was not fundamental contradictions in each sides' prospective goals that facilitated enmity, but rather poor diplomacy. The study then poses that both India—under several leaders—and the United States, under Reagan, were able to cast aside doctrinaire ideology in order to prioritize a working relationship. This in turn laid the framework for what has become today an important alliance and friendship between the world's two largest democracies.

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Introduction

Perhaps nothing more true has been said about US-Indo relations than that reality has never met expectation. From the very beginning of relations between these two countries, the reasons to expect a deep bilateral bond have seemed apparent. Indeed as the two largest democracies in the world, with seemingly clear cultural and historical connections, many have professed a sincere belief that they ought to be natural partners and close friends. However, since Indian independence in 1947, this grand hope has only recently manifested into a reality

The issues that caused the frigid complexion of this relationship for most of its history have been wide ranging. The aim of this study will be to explore the main obstacles to friendly US-Indo relations from the independence of India in 1947 to the 1980s and the Reagan administration.

While this study will be done chronologically, it posits that there have been three umbrella categories in US-Indo relations during this period. The first two are the main determinants of discord between the United States and India, while the third is a more general development during the 1980s, which led to a marked improvement in relations and a blueprint for what has become a friendship.

This first determinant of discord is the ideological contrast between the leaders of India and the United States. On the Indian side, there has been a philosophy of neutralism in the face of global, Cold War politics that often found the US demanding that a country either be with it or against it in its struggle against the Soviet Union. For its part, the US foreign policy during this era was at times controlled by diplomats who felt that they were representatives not simply in a struggle between nations but rather

between good and evil. Thus the doctrinaire philosophy of neutralism on the Indian side was confronted with the moralist, good versus evil, vision of US politicians.

The second category that added to this divisiveness was the politics of security that were so prevalent during the Cold War. The Cold War bred an environment in geopolitics where US policy towards South Asia was almost always led by its larger policy of combating the Soviet Union. Thus US policy towards India often had little to do with the country on an individual level but rather was absorbed into the larger encounter with communism.

In both of the first two categories, it was not a fundamental inability to solve differences and work cooperatively; it was the failure of both sides' respective leaders to confront the issues in a realistic, pragmatic and utilitarian manner. Unlike some other poor relationships—the US-Russian relationship for example—the source of poor relations between the US and India was not mutually exclusive goals, but rather poor diplomacy.

In the final category this study explores how, rather unexpectedly, US-Indo relations improved during the 1980s. Ronald Reagan was considered to be an ideologue who believed strongly in the fight against communism, a factor that would seem to have exaggerated rather than alleviated the first two categories. At the same time in India, political forces seemed to be reemerging that would further damage relations. In spite of all this, there was a marked improvement that was due to several main factors. The first was an elevation in the quality of diplomacy between the two nations that eased the tensions of the ideological impasse. It was accompanied by a simultaneous relaxation of these ideological convictions that also saw both countries come to understand their goals

and aims more clearly, thus lessening the tensions created by several decades of frustration.

Before beginning right after Indian independence, it is necessary to point out that during this period, the US-Indo relationship was typically not a priority for either country. Although this study will look almost exclusively at the issue of US-Indo relations, it is not meant to suggest that either side generally considered the issue amongst its highest priorities. Nonetheless, it is an important relationship, between the world's two largest democracies, and is only growing in significance today.

CHAPTER I

The Early Phase: The Emergence of Security Politics and Aggressive Ideology

The earliest phase of US-Indo relations was not only the one that set the frigid tone for the next forty years, but it is also the era in which the moralist philosophies of both nations were most clearly on display. In India, the reason for this was fairly simple. The country had just gained independence from the British Empire, and the government was almost purely made up of the figures that had fought for the country's freedom. Though he never served in an official position, the most well known of these freedom fighters was, of course, Mahatma Gandhi—whose international celebrity is derived probably as much from his status as an ideological leader, as it is from his struggle for Indian self-rule. Proving this point is hardly the exercise of this study, but noting it does give the reader a sense of the kind of people who formed the ruling elite of the first years of the Republic of India. The reasons for United States (US) ideological and moralistic policy are less clear and require considerably more explanation.

At the end of the Second World War, the United States suddenly found itself with an enormous amount of responsibility on a global scale. When the Soviets refused to pull their forces out of Central and Eastern Europe, the United States became intensely worried about the spread of communism. These developments between the US and the USSR facilitated a US foreign policy dominated by what has frequently been called “power politics” or “politics of security.” After the Second World War,

“The US foreign policy itself [was...] conducted with one supreme goal in view: the containment of Communism and the Communist bloc led by the Soviet Union. The main determinant of the US foreign relations [...] has been the consideration of how a particular policy would help the United States in its global confrontation with the Soviet Union.”¹

While Americans knew little about South Asia in the late 1940s², this foundation for US foreign policy applied very much to the region. American foreign policy towards India during the Truman Administration was therefore based on the belief that India could be prevented from “going communist” with “sensible American diplomatic support and economic assistance,” and would thus become a “bulwark against the rising tide of totalitarianism that was threatening the newly free nations of the world.”³ Hence the birth of India as a state was accompanied by the emergence of these power politics.

Little about India as a sovereign nation was interesting to US policy makers. Rather it was how she could fit into the brewing Cold War that they focused on—when they thought about India at all. Yet the Truman administration did not take as intensely a communist centered approach towards South Asia as later administrations would. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that, as the Second World War had just ended, Cold War geo-politics were not as well formed as they would later become. The second was due to the Ambassador to India Charles Bowles’ view that a more complex policy was needed. Or as he stated:

“How silly we must sometimes seem [...] reducing every question to the Communist equation. Some of the questions are bigger than communism [...] If all the Communists

¹ P.M. Kamath, “Indo-US Relations: Dynamics of Change” (South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1987), 38

² Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story: The First Sixty Years of U.S. Relations with India and Pakistan” (Sage Publications, 2010), 28

³ Ibid. , 29

on earth disappeared overnight, the need for foreign aid to assist new struggling peoples to achieve stable democratic societies would still be there.”⁴

Bowles’ sophistication was impressive. Rather than viewing the world purely through the scope of the emerging US-Soviet conflict, he instead sought to see India as an example of how a Third World nation could elect a different path from communism. He did not see his mission in India as anti-Soviet *per se*, but rather pro-Indian. For Bowles, the best strategy for preventing the spread of communism into India was encouraging democracy in the country through aid and support. In essence, Bowles did not purely focalize his mission in India through the lens of the struggle with the USSR.

This type of sophistication would not last long however, as US foreign policy became increasingly obsessed with the Soviet/Communist problem. When Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected in 1952, “the incoming Republicans favored a more conservative approach to the nation’s problems—they wanted less government at home and a tougher policy toward Communist adversaries abroad.”⁵

This went in the opposite direction of nascent Indian foreign policy. Under the first Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, India became a leader in the “non-aligned” movement. To Nehru, India needed to approach all foreign policy issues from a purely situational perspective. That is, as a foreign policy decision came up, it ought to be considered on its own, in relation to what India believed to be best for it and the world, and not according to a previously decided alliance. As Nehru explained, India, “Inevitably has to consider her enlightened self-interest, but at the same time she [brings...] to it a touch of her idealism. Thus she has tried to combine idealism with national interest. The main objectives of that policy are: The pursuit of peace, not

⁴ Charles Bowles, “Ambassador’s Report” (Harper & Brothers, 1954), 343

⁵ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States: Estranged Democracies” (Sage Publications, 1994), 99

through alignment with any major power or group of powers, but through an independent approach to each controversial or disputed issue.”⁶

Here it is possible to see the ideological—and indeed moralistic— nature of Indian foreign policy at the time. Nehru genuinely believed that an idealistic, philosophical approach was needed for Indian foreign policy and not simply what he refers to here as “enlightened self-interest.” Thus India from its very emergence was guided by a sense of moralistic duty. Nehru saw the Indian example of having acquired independence not through revolution, but through persuasion, as inherent evidence that India could, and should, be a moral leader in the world—in spite of her poverty. Indeed, “India began independence in 1947 believing itself to be a moral super.”⁷ To put it simply, for Nehru, what was *right* for India would be *right* for the world.

The aforementioned “tougher policy” of the Eisenhower administration manifested itself in Asia mainly in the form of vast network of military alliances.⁸ The concept behind these alliances was that they provided security to a region highly susceptible to totalitarian and communist incursion. This was especially exacerbated by the Chinese Revolution, which saw the most populous country in the world turn communist. Several things about this US policy and its developments bothered India. Nehru stressed, “That the Asians should be left alone to sort out their own differences. Military pacts, promoted by outside powers, would only increase tensions and bickerings in the area, thereby mounting the possibility of a general war.” Furthermore, “The

⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru, “The Pursuit of Peace (1 November 1949)” Vital Speeches of the Day, Vol. 16, no. 2, P. 48

⁷ Edward Luce, “In Spite of the Gods: The Rise of Modern India” (Random House, Inc., New York, 2005), 261

⁸ Tripta Desai, “India-USA Diplomatic Relations” (Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2006), 43-45

American assertion that Asian countries were in immediate danger of subjugation by Communist China, did not stand well with the Indian leaders.”⁹

Basically Nehru and other Indian officials believed in a concept of Asian unity and mixed it with their belief in the fundamental danger of militarization and alliances. Essentially, Nehru saw the Chinese Communist movement in the exact opposite nature that Americans did. To Americans it was evidence of the Soviet, Communist wave spreading around the globe. To Nehru it was a great Asian civilization freeing itself from imperial bondage—a process Nehru would have found quite familiar and endearing. Furthermore, as one of the leaders of the Indian struggle against colonialism, Nehru was almost always wary and irritated by Western attempts to gain influence in the region as he, and many of the original Indian politicians, saw these attempts as the same sort of Western bullying that they had for so long fought against.¹⁰ As Ambassador Bowles explained, if you attempted to explain to Nehru how dangerous communism was to Asian countries, “he would start out giving you a twenty-minute lecture on imperialism, colonialism, the French hanging on to a rich fort hold- etc. [...] You’d get it for twenty minutes.”¹¹ In essence, Nehru found Western imperialism a more grave threat than communism. The result was that within the first decade of US-Indo relations the two countries were strongly diverging in their outlooks. How this manifested itself in policy is extremely important.

The man perhaps most responsible for US foreign policy in South Asia during this early period was Eisenhower’s Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. Dulles had been

⁹ Ibid. , 44-45

¹⁰ Edward Luce, “In Spite of the Gods”, 261-3

¹¹ “The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Formative Years” (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), 271

an extremely devout, lifelong Presbyterian Christian, from which he apparently got his values. Despite this, Dulles had distinguished himself in 1934 by being an outspoken supporter of Adolf Hitler while he was a high-ranking partner at the New York City law firm of Sullivan & Cromwell.¹² In 1950, Dulles published *War or Peace*, which was essentially a tirade against the strategy of containment—he advocated for active “liberation” of the various peoples living in the Soviet bloc.¹³ However, as Secretary of State, Dulles was an extremely conservative diplomat who wanted to erect a militarized barrier of pro-Western countries around the Soviet Union and Communist China—essentially the policy of containment he railed against in his 1950 publication.¹⁴ As stated earlier, this was a goal that Nehru could not accept or be party to. To make this more problematic, to Dulles, the fight against Communism was a moral one, not simply a foreign policy priority. While the Truman administration certainly wanted to contain communism as a matter of US national interest, Dulles’ beliefs were led by “hawkish” and “doctrinaire anticommunism.”¹⁵ In the early 1950’s the American side found itself under a powerful new diplomatic leader who would intensely damage US-Indo relations. “John Foster Dulles emerged as the country’s new foreign policy apostle [...] It was not only the fact that Dulles represented a radical departure from the global perspectives of the bulk of his immediate Democratic predecessors. His real achievement was his ability to infuse American foreign policy with an ideological intensity.”¹⁶

Dulles was never shy about enunciating his beliefs. In a speech in 1952, right before becoming Secretary of State, Dulles expressed his dismay at what he perceived to

¹² See, Peter Grose. “Gentleman Spy: The Life of Allen Dulles” (University of Massachusetts Press, 1996)

¹³ See, John Foster Dulles, “War or Peace” (The Macmillan Company, 1950)

¹⁴ Harold A. Gould, “The Hope and The Reality: US-Indian Relations” (Westview Press, 1992), 36

¹⁵ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 32

¹⁶ Ibid. , 33

be a recent, immoral trend in US foreign policy. Or, as Dulles himself explained, “our Declaration of Independence was based upon an appeal to the ‘laws of nature and of nature’s god’ [...] Until recently, this point of view has dominated American foreign policy and American diplomacy.” Recently however, Dulles claimed, “US policy [...] illustrates the encroachment of the non-moral approach [...] It reflect[s] the Soviet Communist philosophy of omitting all mention of law or justice [...] our present foreign policies are largely under the influence of those who do not believe in moral force.”¹⁷

This strand of ideological morality being infused into US foreign policy was a drastic change from the sort of sophisticated pragmatism, understanding and respect that Chester Bowles had advocated as Ambassador to India. Dulles appears to have sincerely believed that, in all but a few rare exceptions, the basis for US foreign policy ought to be what he considered morally righteous according to his Christian faith. This of course was destined to clash with Nehru and his own strand of moralistic policy.

Dulles not only disagreed with Indian non-alignment, he regarded it as morally repugnant and entirely unacceptable. The relations between the two countries quickly soured. “The issue was almost personalized into a conflict between Nehru and John Foster Dulles; Nehru regarded Dulles as somewhat stupid, short-sighted and crude, while Dulles regarded Nehru and non-alignment as immoral and anti-American.”¹⁸ In essence, Dulles did not believe that there was such a thing as neutralism. For him, the issue was about *right* versus *wrong* and thus one could not refuse to take a side. “His intolerant stance [...] reflected his personal belief that there was a stark contrast between

¹⁷ “The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Formative Years” (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2008), 93

¹⁸ Benjamin Zachariah, “Nehru” (Routledge, 2004), 218

communism and democracy, and that, therefore, to take a neutral position was tantamount to choosing the former.”¹⁹ During a speech at Iowa State College in 1956 he declared, “neutrality has increasingly become [...] obsolete and except under very exceptional circumstances, it is an immoral and shortsighted conception.”²⁰

With this aggressive ideology in hand, one of Dulles’ first international trips was to the Middle East and South Asia. One of his principle goals during the trip was to find partners for his moral crusade against communism. When he met Nehru in New Delhi, his mind was largely already made up. “Dulles commented in his report of the conversation, ‘I assumed this would be relayed (to the Chinese Communists)’”²¹ At one point later in the report, Dulles recalls trying to explain to an unreceptive Nehru the reason for US military involvement in Korea. “Perhaps we are idealistic,” he says, “but one thing for which Americans had been willing to fight and die for was ideals.” He then sarcastically adds, “We did apologize for this.”²² Based on these beliefs, Dulles went into conversations in New Delhi with the assumption that Nehru was a cohort of the enemy Chinese, and then proceeded to lecture Nehru—a man who had spent half his life in prison as a result of fighting for Indian independence— about the uniquely American quality of fighting for ideals. Predictably, nothing positive was accomplished during Dulles’ visit to India.

¹⁹ “The Eisenhower Administration and Neutralism.” Encyclopedia of the New American Nation. 1st Edition. (Charles Scribners & Sons, 2005)

²⁰ “Dulles Formulated and Conducted U.S. Foreign Policy for More Than Six Years,” *New York Times*, 25 May 1959. Accessed 10 March 2012.

<http://www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0225.html>

²¹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 101

²² “The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Formative Years”, 93

While Dulles did not find a willing partner in his crusade against communism in India he did find it in Pakistan, India's greatest enemy. In fact, Pakistan was really the only country Dulles visited that gleamed real interest in participating in Dulles' vision of surrounding the Soviet Union with a ring of highly militarized, pro-American countries. "Dulles offered the State Department a glowing assessment of the 'one country that has the moral courage to do its part in resisting communism.' Emphasizing that Pakistan's 'genuine feeling of friendship [...] exceeded to a marked degree that encountered in any country previously visited on this trip.' [...] he proposed [...] providing Pakistan with some military assistance."²³

Again, one can clearly view the moral ideology that Dulles infused into US foreign policy. A country's decision to align with the US, against the Soviets, was not political or pragmatic but rather an issue of morality. Or as Dulles put it, it was the Pakistani people's "strong spiritual faith and martial spirit,"²⁴ that led them to seek alignment with the United States. Dulles was however, a bit confused on the nature of Pakistani motivations.

Although Dulles might have thought the Pakistanis were interested in friendship with the US because of their moral courage, the actual reasons for Pakistan's willingness to join the American power bloc were well known to India. What Pakistan desired from its alliance with the US was to enhance its military capabilities in case of war with India. Pakistan saw itself as vitally weaker than its larger neighbor, and given Pakistani intentions to gain control of Indian controlled Kashmir, they needed to plan for such a

²³ Robert J. McMahon, "The Cold War on the Periphery: The United States, India, and Pakistan" (Columbia University Press, 1994), 160

²⁴ "The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Formative Years", 487

war. While Dulles saw Pakistan as a willing member of his grand anti-communist strategy, Pakistan saw itself in much different terms.

“Pakistan readily joined the Grand Alliance, not because it faced credible threats either from internal communist subversion or external communist aggression, but solely because its leaders perceived this as a necessary way to equalize the imagined power gap vis-à-vis India [...] Alliance with the United States, it was reasoned would enable Pakistan [...] to create a military machine capable of eventually waging war [...] against India.”²⁵

While Dulles either did not fully understand Pakistan’s true motivations, or did not care, the Indians both understood and deeply cared. The arms deal between the US and Pakistan was seen in India as a direct and immediate threat to the country and the region at large. Prime Minister Nehru reacted furiously, saying:

“A military pact between Pakistan and the US changed the whole balance in this part of the world and affects India more especially. The US must realize that the reaction in India will be that this arming of Pakistan is largely against India [...] whether the US wants that or not [...] They imagine that such an alliance [...] would bring [...] pressure on India as to compel her to change her policy of nonalignment. This is a rather naïve view because the effect on India will be just the opposite, that is, one of greater resentment against the US.”²⁶

Indeed the military alliance between the US and Pakistan damaged US-Indo relations that just several years earlier had been considered so encouraging.²⁷ Here, for the first time we see diplomatic failure, inspired by aggressive ideology. Dulles was pursuing a foreign policy inspired by his interpretation of “god’s law.” It led him to erroneously view Pakistan as a partner in a moral crusade against Soviet and Chinese communism. It did little, if any, over all damage to Asian communism. What it did do however, was to bring America into alliance with the oppressive military dictatorship that

²⁵ Harold Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 34-35

²⁶ Congressional Record, US Senate, 85th Congress, 2nd Session, vol. 104, P. 5246-55, 25 March 1958

²⁷ Tripta Desai, “India-USA Diplomatic Relations”, 60-61

was Pakistan. It undoubtedly emboldened their territorially aggressive agenda in Kashmir, if for no other reason that it provided Pakistan with increased military capability. What it also did, as Nehru explained, was to weaken the US' position with India, which was—and is—the subcontinent's preeminent power. Dulles' diplomatic effect in South Asia was to bring us closer to the subcontinent's weaker, less democratic member, and distance us from its stronger, thoroughly democratic member. Ironically, this was all done in the name of defending, preserving and ultimately spreading freedom.

Despite all this, US-Indo relations would eventually level out by the end of the decade to a sort of begrudging respect. Thus Nehru and Dulles' personal antipathies never devolved into open hostilities between the two countries. In reality, no existential issue of enormous concern ever emerged during this period. Thus while the countries were on diverging paths, and the relationship was quickly souring, there was never a spark to ignite a broader conflict. Nevertheless, the groundwork had been laid for a disappointing relationship.

CHAPTER II

The 1960s- Hope, Confusion, Failure

The 1960s proved to be an incredibly dynamic period in US-Indo relations. The decade began with a promising start, as the Kennedy administration seemed poised to touch off a new era of sophisticated, and pragmatic involvement in South Asia—rebuking the myopic idealism of the previous decade. Indeed, Nehru and Kennedy—despite many obvious differences—appeared oddly similar in some ways. Both were from their countries’ liberal, educated, wealthy and sophisticated elite and thus appeared capable of real personal interaction and friendship.

As fortune had it, both men were to meet their demise early in the decade—first Kennedy from assassination, and then Nehru from old age. Added to this shocking and abrupt shift in the political landscape in both countries was the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan in 1965 over a territorial dispute in Kashmir. That proved to be the impetus for stagnation, then reversal in the improving US-Indo relations. Finally, the decade saw the rise of Nehru’s daughter, Indira Gandhi—quite possibly the most formidable figure in all of India’s history since independence. The combination of the 1965 war, and the emergence of Indira Gandhi laid the groundwork for a path towards the nadir in the history of US-Indo relations.

With Eisenhower leaving office, the 1960 election seemed to hold the future of US-Indo relations in the balance. The Republican nominee was none other than Richard Nixon, who had been Eisenhower’s Vice President for the previous eight years. By all accounts, he was a “cold-warrior” in the truest sense. His speeches rang of the

dichotomous worldview propagated by Dulles. In one of his last speeches as Vice President, Nixon reiterated the stance that the battle against communism was an issue of morality. “What we must realize is that this struggle probably will not be decided [...] so much of arms, but of faith.”²⁸ Thus, much as with the Eisenhower administration, the world seemed split into a “crude dichotomy,” in which, “India and Nehru clearly did not fit.”²⁹ As Vice President, Pakistan considered Nixon to be a “good friend.”³⁰ To put it simply, one was not a good friend with both Pakistan and India at the same time in 1960.

Vice President Nixon’s opponent—and ultimately the victor—in the election was, of course, John F. Kennedy. Amongst the myriad of differences between the two candidates, was Kennedy’s friendly position concerning India. In fact, Kennedy’s pro-India position was firmly established by the time he ran for president. Kennedy had been a documented critic of Dulles’ doctrinaire, foreign policy. It was not that Kennedy was without ideology, but rather that his was remarkably sophisticated, intellectual, and infused with a historical subtlety which would have been unthinkable during the Eisenhower administration. Rather than viewing non-alignment as immoral, “Kennedy felt that new states such as India, absorbed in the travail of nationhood, were as naturally indifferent to the moral issues of the Cold War as Americans [...] had been to the moral crises of the Napoleonic wars.”³¹ To Kennedy, it was then therefore natural that a country such as India would want to work on its internal problems, rather than become entangled in the US-Soviet, Cold War struggle. As he himself put it, “We should look

²⁸ Richard Nixon. “The Meaning of Communism to Americans.” Volunteers for Nixon Lodge. Washington DC. 1960. http://watergate.info/nixon/60-08-21_communism.shtml

²⁹ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 43

³⁰ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 181

³¹ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock: US Foreign Policy Toward India Since Independence” (Greenwood Press, 1995), 114

with friendship upon the people who want to beat their problems [...] and do not wish to become associated with the tail of our kite.”³² None of this is meant to suggest that Kennedy did not envisage an important struggle between the US and the USSR, and that Asia would be a particularly important arena in this struggle. Rather, Kennedy believed that the best way to win this struggle was to encourage strong, national independence on the part of the newly formed countries, rather than force them into participating in a crusade. To Kennedy, self-determination, with American encouragement through significant aid, would be the best strategy for containment, not simply military alliances. What emerged was a so called, “dual model” for South Asia. It consisted of significant and diverse aid packages to India, with continued military assistance to Pakistan.³³ Thus the dual model theoretically allowed for the US to have two friends in South Asia, rather than choose sides in the perpetual Indo-Pakistani conflict. As a Senator, Kennedy tried to put this philosophy into practice by, “Spearheading the drive for increased U.S. aid to India to help India meet [...its] goals.” In essence, rather than preaching to the world the moral duty it had to contain communism as Dulles had done, Kennedy wanted to defeat communism, “by demonstrating to the world democracy’s advantages over its totalitarian competitors.”³⁴ To Kennedy, the Eisenhower/Dulles model could only hope to contain communism—he believed his strategy would defeat it.³⁵

This sophisticated worldview was supplemented with a team of talented, intellectuals at Kennedy’s side when he won the election. Chester Bowles, the former

³² John F. Kennedy, “The Strategy of Peace” (Harper and Row, New York, 1960), 218

³³ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story.”, 43

³⁴ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States: The Cold Peace” (Twayne Publishers, Boston, 1990), 99

³⁵ Ibid.

ambassador who had presided over such promising times, first served as Kennedy's foreign policy adviser during the campaign, later as his undersecretary of state, and then finally returned to the position of US ambassador to India.³⁶ However, for the first several years of Kennedy's presidency, liberal, Harvard professor, John K. Galbraith served as ambassador to India. Galbraith was a well-known economist, and was particularly renowned for his doubts in the omnibenevolence of the free market. "Galbraith carried to New Delhi openness to the Indian program of mixed socialism and capitalism generally lacking in the Republicans. Like Bowles, Galbraith enthusiastically supported increased U.S. aid to India."³⁷

Kennedy, Bowles and Galbraith were remarkably successful at procuring aid for India. Quite quickly, the Kennedy administration was able to secure record levels of assistance to India. By 1962, the US had tripled its aid to India from \$135 million, to \$500 million. Later in the year, the administration pledged a further \$1 billion.³⁸ Nehru expressed enormous gratitude. He wrote to Kennedy, "Our task, great as it is, has been made light by the goodwill and generous assistance that has come to us from the United States. To the people of the United States and more especially to you, Mr. President, we feel deeply grateful."³⁹ A later letter from Kennedy to Nehru shows a level of sincere respect between the two leaders. Kennedy wrote, "This kind of exchange between us and the working out together of mutual problems, betokens the sort of Indian United States

³⁶ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 181

³⁷ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 100

³⁸ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 186

³⁹ Sarvepalli Gopal, "Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography" (Cambridge University Press, 1984), 97

relationship I seek. Rest assured that, whatever ups and downs, the US continues to stand squarely behind the development and security of India.”⁴⁰

The US-Indo relationship had taken a remarkable upward turn in just several years. This is not to suggest that everything that occurred during this period was uniformly positive. Indeed, Nehru’s visit to Washington in 1963 was considered to be largely a disaster. Nehru was unresponsive and disengaged. However, both sides rightly attributed this to his health, and not as a slight to Kennedy or the US. Despite this, Kennedy’s worldview had proved to be far more utilitarian in practice, as well as far more sophisticated in theory, than Dulles’ had been. By treating India with respect, and viewing the dealings with her not solely through a wider conflict with the USSR, both the US and India had been given the maneuverability for positive engagement. The foreign aid given to India during this period allowed for important internal development, which Kennedy rightly saw as the most effective bulwark against communism. The fledgling Indian democracy was vulnerable—by that measure Dulles had been right, but its vulnerability lay in massive internal problems associated with hundreds of millions of impoverished—and often starving—masses, and the need for industrialization, and infrastructure to name just a few of its paramount concerns. Its vulnerability lay not, as Dulles had perceived, in the possibility of it being overrun by faithless, anti-American communists. India, to put it simply, was not, and could not be viewed as, just another piece in the zero-sum game of good versus evil that served as Dulles’ lens through which all that happened in the world was to be viewed. By recognizing the nature of Indian vulnerability correctly, and treating it with the respect a country of its position and

⁴⁰ The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Later Years”, *Telegram from President John F. Kennedy to Prime Minister Nehru* (1963), 2

population merit, Kennedy had made a truly significant leap forward in the US-Indo relationship. His progress was not to last long.

On November 22, 1963, the US, and indeed the entire world, was stunned by the news that the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy had been killed by an assassin's bullet. This of course made his Vice President, Lyndon Baines Johnson, the 36th President of the United States of America. He was a profoundly different man than his predecessor had been. Kennedy was the son of a wealthy, established, New England family. His interest in foreign affairs was a matter of family affairs- his father had been the ambassador to the United Kingdom. Kennedy attended Harvard, where his summer activities included sailing to France, with a personal convertible in stow for transportation upon arrival.⁴¹ To prepare for his honors thesis—titled *Appeasement at Munich*—his father arranged for him to tour Western Europe, the Soviet Union and the Balkans.⁴² Johnson, on the other hand, was born in a farmhouse in a town of just several hundred residents in central Texas. At the local school, the teacher needed to be persuaded to take on Johnson as a pupil. After graduating from a local high school at age fifteen, Johnson worked on a construction gang, building roads. When he decided to attend Southwest Texas State Teacher's College, he borrowed \$75 to cover upfront costs, and then worked as a janitor while taking classes.⁴³ After graduating in 1930, he spent most of the next thirty years clawing his way to the top of southern Democratic politics, and eventually became the Senate Majority Leader. During the Democratic primary,

⁴¹ Robert Dallek, "An Unfinished Life: John F. Kennedy, 1917-1963" (Little, Brown and Co. Boston, MA, 2003), 41

⁴² Ibid. , 61

⁴³ LBJLibrary.Org. LBJ Library Archives Staff. Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum. *Lyndon B. Johnson's Life and Times*. <http://www.lbjlibrary.org/about-lbj/timeline.html>

Johnson, and several other prominent Democrats, formed the “Stop Kennedy” coalition, in an attempt to prevent John F. Kennedy from being the Democratic nominee.⁴⁴

However, once Kennedy secured the nomination, in a bizarre twist of fate—in a move of pure political expediency—Kennedy selected Johnson as his vice presidential running mate. As it turned out, despite their personal hatred for each other, Kennedy needed a well-known, southern Democrat on his ticket.⁴⁵ Their two paths to the White House could not have been different. Nevertheless, on November 22, 1963, Lyndon Baines Johnson was suddenly the President of the United States.

Johnson was known as a, “master of political hardball,” but, “virtually devoid of any international experience or expertise.”⁴⁶ As such, he seemed to have proportionally little interest in the area; the Indian envoys in Washington suddenly found themselves struggling to get even a modicum of attention from the new President. Even the Indian ambassador to the United States, B.K. Nehru (a personal relative of Prime Minister Nehru) had to wait nearly two years before he “was able to meet privately with Lyndon Johnson.”⁴⁷ The new President’s relative disinterest in foreign affairs began to have serious consequences. For information concerning communism in Asia, he began to rely increasingly on Robert Komer, a staffer from the National Security Council. Komer believed that the key to good foreign policy was dissecting issues into statistics and facts. Thus when he looked at South Asia, he judged that “it made more sense for the United States to line up with India [...] India, as the largest and potentially most powerful non-

⁴⁴ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 227

⁴⁵ See, Robert A. Caro, “The Path to Power: The Years of Lyndon Johnson, Volume 1.” (Random House, Inc., New York, New York, 1982)

⁴⁶ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 51

⁴⁷ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 227

Communist Asia nation, is in fact the major prize for which we, the Soviets, and the
Chicombs are competing in Asia.”⁴⁸ Although Johnson and Komer supported a
continuation of a pro-India policy in South Asia, the ideology is disturbing. Kennedy too
had recognized India’s place as the pre-eminent power in South Asia, but he had never
regarded it as a “prize.” Viewing India as such, once again reduced her to a chest piece
in the Cold War struggle. Such policies have never produced good results for the US-
Indo relationship.

Before much else could happen however, India was shocked by the death of the
only Prime Minister it had ever known, Jawaharlal Nehru. Even Ali Bhutto, Prime
Minister of Pakistan and one of Nehru’s greatest adversaries could not resist praising
Nehru’s memory. Writing in a private letter, he remarked,

“Although he committed aggression, alienated his neighbors, suppressed his opponents,
made mock convenience of his ethics, he was Nehru the redeemer of 400 million people,
a valiant fighter who led his people to freedom, and for the first time in six hundred
years, gave them a place in the sun.”⁴⁹

Not only had India lost Nehru, but it was unclear who would replace him. In the
short-term, it would be Lal Bahadur Shastri. Just as Johnson was a profoundly different
figure than Kennedy, Shastri was to Nehru. In virtually every corner of the globe, the
name Nehru was known, usually disliked, but nevertheless respected.⁵⁰ Of Shastri,
virtually nothing was known. “The *Times of India* aptly characterized Shastri as, ‘a
conciliatory, compromiser and coordinator, above all a shy, modest, humble, and

⁴⁸ Memorandum to President Johnson from Robert Komer, 24 February 1964, From
Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

⁴⁹ Sarvepalli Gopal, “Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography”, 268-7

⁵⁰ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 107

unpretending man who hardly ever made an enemy during his entire career.”⁵¹ In retrospect, this is probably the type of figure India needed at the time. Larger figures would soon emerge, but in the mean time, “Shastri [...] helped ensure a smooth transition of power.”⁵²

The passing of Nehru occurred at a precarious time in South Asia. Two years earlier the Chinese army had embarrassed Indian forces in the Himalayas. The conflict was extremely short, and the territory lost was essentially inconsequential from the perspective of Indian national security. However, it did put a definitive end to the Nehru vision of harmony, coexistence and peaceful cooperation between the two Asian “giants.”⁵³ It had also produced a very bizarre state of affairs. On the one hand, it tightened ties between China and Pakistan, the latter always being pleased to see harm done to India. On the other, it pushed India closer to the US, and simultaneously the USSR—who were having their own fall out with the Chinese. Furthermore, the increasingly friendly US-Indo relationship was worsening the US-Pakistani relationship.⁵⁴ Dulles’ dichotomous view of South Asia— faulty as it had been originally— was really beginning to break down by the early 1960s.

As documented earlier, Komer and Johnson had already decided that India was the greatest “prize” to be won in this re-shuffling of Asian, security politics. As such, Washington ought not just to curry her favor by continuing Kennedy’s aid programs, but also by extending significant military aid to India. What India really needed in order to shore up its defenses were state-of-the art aircraft; in this case three squadrons (about 40-

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 230.

⁵³ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 44

⁵⁴ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 107-8

50 aircrafts) of American made F-104 supersonic, fighter jets. The reason for this need was that the US had supplied Pakistan with the same aircraft. The Johnson administration however, worried that such military aid would cause the Pakistanis to completely abandon its support for the US, and thus refused to include the aircraft as part of the package. The final deal included five years of military aid, with the total package equaling \$500 million.⁵⁵ This of course did not settle India's primary military necessity: the supersonic jets. The Soviets, happy to see incompetence playing itself out in the US-Indo relationship, gladly stepped in and agreed to provide 445 supersonic MiG-21s.⁵⁶

Although Washington's refusal to sell the F-104s to India was indeed appreciated in Pakistan, it ultimately made the Pakistanis more paranoid about the Indian military build-up. The Indians were now to acquire equally effective military technology from the Soviets. Pakistan had earned the enmity of the Soviets via its participation in the American-security bloc. Up until this point, "Pakistan's armed forces could not match India's numbers, but thanks to US aid, they had gained a qualitative edge in armor and air power."⁵⁷ However, with the Indians soon to acquire massive packages of US *and* Soviet technology, the Pakistanis feared their qualitative edge was soon to vanish.

The primary point of disagreement between Pakistan and India—and thus the need to militarize against each other—was the region of Kashmir, in the northern part of the subcontinent. For the sake of simplicity, it suffices to say here that since partition in 1947, both India and Pakistan both have made claims to the territory. It is divided along a "line of ceasefire," (LOC) with the Indian government exercising control over the

⁵⁵ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 229

⁵⁶ Lorne Kavic, "India's Quest for Security: Defense Policies, 1947-1965" (University of California Press, Berkeley, California, 1967), 198-200

⁵⁷ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 235

vastly more populated and valuable part of Kashmir.⁵⁸ In 1965, with the Indian armed forces making considerable improvements, the opportunity to militarily seize control over all of Kashmir seemed to be closing for the Pakistanis. They decided that it was their time to act.

The Pakistani attack began, on August 5th, with the deployment of five thousand guerilla fighters across the LOC, in order to instigate an uprising against Indian rule. The guerillas not only failed to instigate a Kashmiri uprising, but most of them were quickly captured by the Indian armed forces. India quickly launched a minor offensive to capture control of key passes in the terrain, which Pakistan was using to smuggle the guerillas across the LOC.⁵⁹ Thus, phase one of the Pakistani attack was a dismal failure. Instead of cutting its losses, Ayub Khan, the Pakistani Prime Minister, decided that the humiliation was unbearable, and launched a full-scale invasion in the following September. As it turned out, the promise the US had made that its military assistance to Pakistan would never be used against India, proved to be false; the main thrust of the Pakistani invasion was led by US made, and supplied, Patton tanks. The Indian government was predictably furious. The US embassy in New Delhi tried to exert pressure on the White House for some sort of intervention. In a document sent directly to the Secretary of State, the embassy stated, the Indians were reminding them of the, “assurances [...] that we would not permit the use of US equipment by the Pakistanis against India,” then continued to state, “the USG⁶⁰ now has a clear objective to live up to

⁵⁸ Burton Stein, “A History Of India.” (Oxford University Press, 2010), 358

⁵⁹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 235

^{60A} United States Government (this footnote does not appear in the original.)

its assurances.”⁶¹ The embassy’s plea for the US to live up to its assurances went completely unanswered. Bowles, who was now serving as the US ambassador to India, asked the White House’s permission to threaten to cut off military aid to Pakistan if they did not seek an immediate end to fighting. “Washington turned Bowles down.”⁶² Instead, Johnson decided to completely cut off all assistance (economic and military) to both countries.⁶³ The Indian government rightfully viewed this as Washington placing equal blame on both countries. They were understandably livid, as such a stance was factually inaccurate—India had been invaded. “The president’s policy of equating both the nations in imposing an [embargo] was unjust and unfair.”⁶⁴

Nevertheless, the Pakistanis continued their invasion. India successfully repelled it leading to a technical stalemate—though Pakistan had, of course, miserably failed in its attempt to gain control of Indian Kashmir. President Johnson showed a stunning lack of interest in the whole affair. He preferred instead to take a supporting role to the UN’s effort to end the war.⁶⁵ Eventually fighting stopped when both India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire arranged by the Soviets, which the US threw its full support behind.⁶⁶ This again was an inconsistent and confusing action on behalf the Johnson administration. After fifteen years of attempting to limit Soviet influence in the subcontinent, Washington was suddenly supporting a furtherance of such influence. Again, this was a corollary of Johnson's stunning indifference. US Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, made no

⁶¹ “The United States and India: A History Through Archives: The Later Years” *Telegram, From American Embassy New Delhi, To Department of State* (29 May 1965), 152

⁶² Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 236

⁶³ *Ibid.* , 237

⁶⁴ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock” 125

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

attempt at all to cover up the bizarre neutrality. He explained the US policy, saying that India and Pakistan, “allowed the matter to escalate very fast, on both sides, contrary to the advice that was being given them by the United States, so we in effect shrugged our shoulders and said, ‘Well, if you’re going to fight, go ahead and fight, but we’re not going to pay for it.’”⁶⁷

This was diplomacy at its very worst. To begin with, the US had a moral imperative to become involved as—contrary to Rusk’s statement—the US had paid for the war; both sides were using enormous amounts of US supplied military equipment.⁶⁸ The US had militarized an entire subcontinent, with 500 million people living in it, “shrugged” its “shoulders” when war broke out, then claimed that by cutting off aid to both belligerents—after fighting had already begun—it was not going to “pay for it [the war.]” This was a strange blend of hypocrisy and irony. In 1956, Dulles had denounced neutrality as “immoral,” when Nehru refused to be part of an anti-Soviet policy, which had virtually nothing to offer the national interests of India. In 1965, the US was claiming neutrality in a war it had done much to start. Finally, the US policy was entirely and completely antithetical to its own interests. It had managed to push both Pakistan *and* India towards friendlier relations with the Soviets— the precise opposite of the supposed motivating force of US involvement in South Asia.

“Washington’s neutrality earned the enmity of both parties to the conflict. To Pakistan, the United States’ failure to come to the aid of its ally seemed a betrayal of commitments made since the early 1950s. Papers in Pakistan denounced Americans as false friends and agents of Hindu imperialism. If alliance with the United States brought no greater thanks than this, who needed it?”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 239

⁶⁸ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 113

⁶⁹ Ibid.

The Indians were no more pleased: “They could not forget that for more than a decade the United States had assured them that Pakistan would not use American weapons against India [...] Yet when the long predicted attack took place, Washington could bring itself to do no more than slap [... Pakistan] gently on the wrist.”⁷⁰ The result was a Soviet victory in the Cold War, despite the Soviets having done practically nothing. “Washington seemed content for the Soviet Union—which the United States [...] regarded as the major and sinister contender for influence—to assume the position of would-be security manager for the subcontinent.”⁷¹ “The 1965 war thus proved a major diplomatic defeat for the United States and a corresponding coup for the Soviet Union.”⁷²

Just to reiterate, the US, in doing nothing, managed to do great harm—to its relationship with India, to its relationship with Pakistan, and thus to its interests in South Asia and ultimately the world. And once again, this was far from an inevitable result of unfortunate circumstance. It was the wholesale failure of the US government to pursue, and effect rational, self interested policy in South Asia.

It would not be for another several years, however, that the relationship would reach its all-time low.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 240

⁷² H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 113

CHAPTER III

Nixon, Kissinger and Indira- The Nadir of Relations

The late 1960s saw the emergence of a band of new leaders in both the US and India. While Richard Nixon and his National Security Advisor, Henry Kissinger, did not bring nearly the level of moralistic ideology of some of the predecessors to their governance, their intense usage of security politics under a much different type of ideology would bring them into an intense conflict with India. This period also saw the simultaneous, and not unconnected movement of India from strict non-alignment to a closer friendship with the USSR.

The years of the Nixon administration would see US-Indo relations sink to their all-time low. In some ways this was predictable. Indeed President Richard Nixon had earlier served eight years in the White House as Vice President during the Eisenhower administration, a period where US-Indo relations had gone considerably downward. Furthermore, during the interim period between 1961 and 1969, Nixon had traveled extensively, including two trips to South Asia in 1964 and 1967. The results of his travels did not bode well for US-Indo relations during his upcoming presidency. “The Indians received him with the minimum of appropriate protocol; the Pakistanis lionized the former Vice President.”⁷³

The former Vice President was apparently quite insulted by his treatment in India. According to one account “the Nehrus treated him not only like a defeated governor of California, but also like one who had lost an election for dog catcher!” This was again in

⁷³ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 279

sharp contrast to the Pakistanis who “rolled out the red carpet for him and treated him like visiting royalty. This difference in receptions made a lasting impression on Richard Nixon.”⁷⁴

It would of course be a mistake to think that Nixon dictated policy towards an entire region based on his receptions during civilian travels. Indeed he harbored a basic dislike for India that must have come from his time in the White House with Eisenhower and Dulles. As Kissinger subtly put it, “Nixon, to put it mildly, was less susceptible to Indian claims of moral leadership than some of his predecessors; indeed, he viewed what he considered their alleged obsequiousness toward India as a prime example of liberal soft-headedness.”⁷⁵ Kissinger later continued, “Nixon had no time for Mrs. Gandhi’s condescending manner. Privately, he scoffed at her moral pretensions, which he found all the more irritating because he suspected that in pursuit of her purposes she had in fact fewer scruples than he.” For her part, “Mrs. Gandhi, who was as formidable as she was condescending, had no illusions about what Nixon was up to.”⁷⁶

And although on the Indian side, the new Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, did not seem to have quite the level of moralistic conviction as her father (Nehru), she came from the same cultural and emotional heritage and continued the Indian style of diplomacy. Indeed whatever feelings Nixon had for India, Indira seemed to match for Nixon and the US. As one account tells us,

“She told one interviewer, ‘I think I had excellent relations with everybody [American presidents] except Mr. Nixon. And he had made up his mind beforehand.’ Mrs. Gandhi could scarcely conceal her boredom in receiving the former Vice President when he called on her in 1967. After about twenty minutes of desultory conversation, she asked

⁷⁴ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 56-57

⁷⁵ Henry Kissinger, “White House Years” (Little, Brown and Company), 848

⁷⁶ Ibid., 879-81

the Minister of External Affairs escort—speaking in Hindi so Nixon would not understand—how much longer the session would last.”⁷⁷

While it is clear that Nixon and Gandhi did not care for each other, there was nothing tangible that would have suggested in 1969 that relations between the two countries would reach their nadir. Indeed Kissinger wrote in his memoirs that the main goal at the beginning of Nixon’s presidency as regards South Asia was “to avoid adding another complication to our agenda.”⁷⁸

Nixon and Kissinger brought a fairly remarkable vision to the White House. What they sought was to fundamentally alter the international balance of power in order to relieve the US of what they considered the “excessive responsibilities it had undertaken in the years following World War II.”⁷⁹ This would be achieved by forming new relationships with the world’s great powers namely China, the USSR, Japan and Western Europe. This is what Kissinger referred to as the Pentagonal System (with the US obviously being the fifth element) and it revealed a perhaps more sophisticated approach to geo-politics and communism than had been adopted a decade earlier under Eisenhower, Dulles and indeed Nixon—not to mention the absentee strategy of Johnson. The approach revised “the Cold War so that ideology would be replaced by the traditional struggle of nations and powers for pre-dominance.”⁸⁰

The sophistication of the vision came in that it recognized that the US could approach communism in a situational manner rather than as a single entity that needed to be fought against wherever it was encountered. This allowed the US to see China as a

⁷⁷ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 280

⁷⁸ Henry Kissinger, “White House Years”, 848

⁷⁹ Harold A. Gould, “The Hope and The Reality”, 36

⁸⁰ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 124-125

potential ally, or at least counter weight to the Soviets, rather than simply an enemy due to her communism. What the Pentagonal System left little room for was the Third World, of which India was a member.⁸¹ Thus it is fully understandable why Kissinger remarked that the main goal in South Asia was to avoid any complications—the region carried no great significance in the Nixon agenda.

Thus, Nixon and Kissinger sought to replace the aggressive ideologies of former administrations with a radical agenda for a sort of new—or at least altered and reshaped—world order. It was destined to have profound implications.

If the Nixon and Kissinger reshaping were to take place, it clearly required normalization of relations with China. The concept was to use rapprochement with China to weaken the Soviet influence in Asia. In order to do this Nixon took advantage of Pakistan's close ties with Beijing. While previously the warm Pakistan-China relations had caused considerable friction between Islamabad and Washington, Nixon would now use it in order to reach out to China.⁸² Nixon and Kissinger went about this in their trademark paranoid and secretive style. They had little trust for the State Department, and viewed the normalization of relations with China as fundamentally too important and sensitive to turn over to anyone else. Kissinger, therefore, was the only one capable of carrying out the mission. To do so, first Kissinger reached out to the very highest levels of the Pakistani government with the idea. Rightly viewing it as an opportunity to accumulate favors with the Nixon administration, and to isolate the Indians, the Pakistanis gleefully agreed to act as the mediators. During a “routine trip to Pakistan,” Kissinger snuck out of his hotel room before the sun had come up—thereby shedding his

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 280

entourage—and boarded a jet to Beijing. Several days later on July 15, 1971, Nixon announced to a stunned, world audience that he would be traveling to Beijing soon “to seek normalization of relations between the two countries and to exchange views on questions of concern to the two sides.”⁸³

The Indians were not pleased. Since at least 1962, Sino-Indian ties had been heavily strained due to a brief border war.⁸⁴ In addition to rapprochement with China, Nixon also granted what was referred to as a “one time exception” to the earlier policy of selling weapons to Pakistan and allowed for 300 armored personnel carriers and fifty million dollars worth of aircraft.⁸⁵ This was presumably to encourage Pakistani cooperation with respect to Nixon and Kissinger’s plans for China. In the early 1970’s India saw the United States, once again, arming its greatest enemy on one side, and reaching out with friendly gestures to its second great enemy. Predictably India was alarmed. India “feared that the Sino-American relationship would lead to a US-China-Pakistan axis against India and would make the subcontinent a theater of great Power conflicts.”⁸⁶

Partially in response to these developments and partially due to developments within India, “Indira Gandhi decided to [...] establish a more explicit strategic relationship with the Soviet Union.”⁸⁷ While none of this helped US-Indo ties, what would unfold in 1971 would cause the relationship to plummet to its historical low.

⁸³ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 124-5

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* , 201

⁸⁵ *Ibid.* , 284

⁸⁶ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 133

⁸⁷ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 58

In 1947, when the British left South Asia, their holdings were partitioned into the two separate countries of India and Pakistan. In theory, Pakistan was for the areas of the British holdings that were predominantly Muslim. When a plebiscite was held in the British province of Bengal as to which country they wished to join, the electorate chose to join Pakistan and thus became “East Pakistan,” which naturally was not physically connected to modern-day Pakistan, or “West Pakistan.”⁸⁸ Problems began almost immediately as the seat of government and virtually all power rested in West Pakistan. During the period between 1947 and 1971, West Pakistan dominated the national government.⁸⁹ Then in 1971, an East Pakistani “political movement known as the Awami League [...] decided to contest the presidential election. It won a parliamentary majority [...] but the national regime in Islamabad would not accept the result. A bloody repression of East Bengal by the Pakistani army followed in March 1971 in an attempt to maintain domination. Millions of East Pakistanis fled across the border to neighboring India burdening the economy.”⁹⁰

The number of Bengali refugees in India soon numbered in the millions and began to impose an enormous problem for the Indian economy and government. It was estimated that the presence of the refugees was costing India around \$200 million⁹¹ each month.⁹² This was not trivial; India had spent a total of \$70 million for the entire 1965 war with Pakistan.⁹³ In addition India was patently horrified by the violent and brutal

⁸⁸ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 133

⁸⁹ Ibid. , 134

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ This figure is in 2011 USD.

⁹² P.M. Kamath, “Indo-US Relations: Dynamics of Change”, South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1987, P. 63

⁹³ H.W. Brands, “India and the United States”, 128

repression of the Bengali populace by the Pakistani military.⁹⁴ As Mrs. Gandhi put it, “will the world be concerned only if people die because of war between two countries and not if hundreds of thousands are butchered and expelled by a military regime waging war against the people? Who is more important to them, one man and his machine or a whole nation?”⁹⁵

Tensions soon rose to a boiling point between Pakistan and India. Meanwhile in Washington the response was telling. After a meeting with Mrs. Gandhi, Nixon told Kissinger that she was a “bitch.” He then strayed into the grotesque, remarking, “what the Indians need is [...] a mass famine,” to prevent them from going to war, to which Kissinger responded, “Well, the Indians are bastards anyway. They are starting a war there.”⁹⁶

Thus, before the war had even started, Nixon had entirely made up his mind on who was to blame. Though we cannot be sure how serious he meant it, his remark to the effect that an Indian mass famine would be better than it going to war against Pakistan gives us a special insight into his opinion on the world’s second largest country. In a later conversation between the two men, Nixon remarked, “I think that our policy wherever we can should definitely be tilted toward Pakistan, and not toward India.”⁹⁷ Then in a move of firm solidarity with his preference for Pakistan, Nixon sanctioned a “\$40 million package of weapons to Islamabad.”⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Ibid

⁹⁵ Indira Gandhi, Speech given to National Press Club, New York, 1971

⁹⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia (1969-1972), Document 150

⁹⁷ Ibid, Document 156

⁹⁸ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 134

Nixon and Kissinger made a firm decision to back Pakistan in the crisis. They had several reasons for doing so—in addition to his hatred for India and Gandhi. The most important was their intent to normalize relations with China. It is important to note that during the lead up to the Bangladeshi War, Nixon’s China policy was still a complete secret to all but his closest inner circle. As previously mentioned, the Nixon rapprochement policy relied on Pakistan. Thus, Nixon’s primary incentive for South Asian policy had virtually nothing to do with the actual Subcontinent. Furthermore, China was not only Pakistan’s friend, but also India’s enemy. As such, any actions regarding the escalating Bangladeshi conflict—in Nixon’s perspective—had to be conducted with the goals of the Pentagonal re-ordering in mind. Namely, by “tilting” towards Pakistan, Nixon rightfully saw the opportunity to create a favorable environment in Beijing for his upcoming trip there. Since his plans for China were still being connived in the utmost secrecy however, Nixon was forced into—perhaps even convincing himself—portraying the conflict as an unprovoked Indian attempt to destroy the sovereign nation of Pakistan. To put it in crude terms, Nixon had big plans for the world, and India was needlessly complicating them.

The geopolitical considerations of Nixon also had a religious element. As aforementioned, India had virtually no significance in the *Nixonian* world-order. Pakistan on the other hand did. And this was not simply as a conduit for normalization of US-Sino relations. While it did not occupy a coveted fifth of the Pentagonal System, the Muslim nations of the world did control a lot of the world’s oil. For the most part, these nations viewed South Asia in highly religious terms. India was an aggressive, Hindu country while Pakistan was the protectorate of the region’s adherents to Islam. Needless

to say, the Muslim countries backed Pakistan. With their control over so much oil, Nixon—already tilting towards Pakistan for Chinese reasons—did not have any reason to alienate them.⁹⁹

When tensions between India and Pakistan broke out into full-scale war, the Nixon administration took a number of steps to aid the Pakistanis. As a third motivation¹⁰⁰ for taking the Pakistani side, Nixon had the Soviets to consider. Though it is not entirely clear why, Nixon had become utterly convinced that the Indians were carrying out the Soviets desire to dismember Pakistan. Speaking to Kissinger, Nixon explained “Henry [...] this is a goddamn Russian ploy.”¹⁰¹ Kissinger for his part contacted a number of Arab countries to see if they could provide military aid to Pakistan.¹⁰² Kissinger and Nixon then agreed that the Chinese ought to be urged to join the conflict on the side of the Pakistanis.¹⁰³ In response, the Chinese contacted the Pakistanis “accusing India of ‘gross interference in the affairs of Pakistan [and added] should the Indian expansionists dare to launch aggression against Pakistan the Chinese Government and people will, as always firmly support the Pakistan Government and people in their just struggle to safeguard state sovereignty and national independence.’”¹⁰⁴

India’s motivations at the time ranged from admirable to cynical. As already noted, India was suffering the burden of millions upon millions of refugees. This turned

⁹⁹ See, Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, *Nixon: The Tilt*

¹⁰⁰ I’m not listing them here in any attempt to suggest one was more, or less important than the others.

¹⁰¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia (1969-1972), Document 165

¹⁰² Ibid

¹⁰³ Ibid

¹⁰⁴ P.M. Kamath, “Indo-US Relations”, 64

a fundamentally internal Pakistani issue into a legitimately Indian one. India's leaders and public were also understandably outraged by the shocking violence being perpetrated by the Pakistani military. Of particular concern to India was the targeting of Bengali Hindus, who were being singled out by the West Pakistanis as the agents of an Indian conspiracy against Pakistan.¹⁰⁵ This was largely ridiculous. Though India was encouraging the Bengali's, it would be disingenuous and inaccurate to suggest that the citizenry of West Pakistan were not acting upon their accord. Though they were being aided by India, they were doing it for their own reasons. Indeed the figurehead of the Bangladeshi independence movement was Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—a Muslim activist and politician who had supported partition in 1947. This was not the pedigree of an Indian controlled puppet. Not all of India's incentives were humanitarian however. As would be expected, most of the millions of refugees pouring across the border into India were Muslim. Finding a way to get rid of Muslim refugees had plenty of support in the majority Hindu country of India. What better way than to create an independent Bangladesh to which they could be sent back.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps the greatest reason for India getting involved was of course Pakistan itself. As its archenemy, and a threat to its very existence, India hardly needed to think for long before seizing upon the opportunity to embarrass Pakistan. That fact that they could do it by supporting native, Muslim, Bangladeshi freedom fighters made it all the more appealing. Finally, barring a massive Chinese intervention (which the Indians reasonably expected could be avoided via their friendship with Moscow), the Indian military mission was virtually a guaranteed success.

¹⁰⁵ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 290

¹⁰⁶ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 128

In fact, the Indian military was so successful that Nixon became increasingly convinced that Pakistan might be destroyed. So, in order to add teeth to his Pakistani “tilt”, and to convince the Indians to limit their goals to what they had already achieved, Nixon dispatched the aircraft carrier *USS Enterprise* to the Gulf of Bengal.¹⁰⁷ From the Indian perspective this was “Gun-Boat Diplomacy,” and re-affirmed their fears about a US-led anti-Indian alliance. While it should be noted that US actions probably had little effect on the war, symbolically they were catastrophic for US-Indo relations.¹⁰⁸

The US actions, especially the dispatch of the *Enterprise*, led India for the first time to see the US as a possible military enemy. Whereas relations before had often been seen as far below initial expectations, this was truly a record low. “The most important outcome of the war was that India no longer saw the United States as a potential ally against China [...] but as a potential enemy military enemy against which it would have to do some planning [...] by the time the fighting ended in December 1971, relations between the United States and India had plunged to previously uncharted depths”¹⁰⁹

The Bangladesh War resulted in a crushing Indian defeat of Pakistani forces and the establishment of an independent Bengali nation. “Supported by a delirious civilian population, Indian divisions took the surrender of the Pakistani forces on 15 December.”¹¹⁰

Once again, philosophical delusion appeared to have triumphed over existential necessity. The Pentagonal System, as envisioned by Nixon and Kissinger required a strong Pakistan to help the US in its rapprochement with China. Thus, although Pakistan

¹⁰⁷ Harold A. Gould, “The Hope and The Reality”, 98

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. , 99

¹¹⁰ John Keay, “India: A History” (Grove Press, 2000), 524

was acting in thoroughly condemnable fashion, it was the Indian response that evoked the rage of the US. Essentially, India stepping in to protect its economy, security, and lives of millions of innocent Bangladeshis was an inconvenient development—it did not fit into the model that Nixon and Kissinger had settled upon. Instead of recognizing reality as such, they took a number of actions, which did nothing to actually help the Pakistanis—and much to infuriate the Indians. Of course, it could be argued that Nixon’s only goal was to curry favor with the Chinese, and thus the Pakistanis. And there is no doubt that it did so. On the other hand, it cannot be forgotten that aggressive US support for Pakistan has almost always had the effect of emboldening the Pakistanis in their anti-Indian agenda. While Nixon may have scored some sentimental points with the Sino-Pak alliance, it could have easily escalated into incredibly costly war between China, India and Pakistan. Presumably such a war would inevitably drag in the Soviets and indeed the US at some level. Thus, while Nixon’s Pakistani tilt is understandable given his desires for rapprochement with China, it seems reasonable to expect that such a goal could have been accomplished without bringing US-Indo relations to their nadir; without outspokenly supporting a murderous crackdown in Bangladesh; and without risking a massive war. By putting his overarching goals before all else, Nixon appears to have entirely incapable of dealing with the crisis as it existed. His policies were therefore predictably unfortunate.

After the Bangladesh War: A Road Towards Normalization

While the war resulted in the nadir of US-Indo relations, it paradoxically paved the groundwork for normalization in that the Nixon administration became convinced that India was the preeminent power in South Asia. As one State Department document

puts it, “Nixon Doctrine posits that world order and US security interests are best served by US cooperation with predominant regional powers. India already is such in South Asia and has potential beyond.”¹¹¹

Nixon and Kissinger reacted to this analysis with agreement. As early as January 16, 1972—hardly a month after fighting had ended—they were discussing how to normalize relations with India. The only thing that prevented them from doing so was their upcoming trip to China. As Kissinger stated to Nixon “we cannot do much now before we go to China because the Chinese are psychopathic.” To this Nixon responded, “Yes, in the final analysis, of course [...] we want to improve relations with the Indians.” Finally Kissinger predicted, “by this time next year we’ll have better relations with them than we had before the crises.”¹¹²

Nixon apparently supported this prediction, and to effect it ordered his ambassador to tell the Indian government that, “India has a friend in the White House.”¹¹³ Of course, as is seen in Nixon’s comments and actions during the 1971 war, his claim of friendship with India in 1972 was disingenuous. However the desire to normalize and improve relations appears to have been sincere. The first instance where this sincerity could be seen was in the US’ response to India’s nuclear test in May of 1974. The US was quite surprised by the explosion despite the fact that it had known for some time India had the capability to produce a nuclear weapon.¹¹⁴ India insisted that the test was strictly for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, “it led to an angry reaction from the

¹¹¹ Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume E-7, Documents on South Asia (1969-1972), Document 201

¹¹² Ibid, Document 204

¹¹³ Ibid, Document 221

¹¹⁴ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 315

American [...] antinuclear lobby.”¹¹⁵ Initially the State Department was quite disturbed as well. The Ambassador to India at the time, Daniel Patrick Moynihan drafted a statement critical of the test. Or as he put it, "The (State) Department proposed to issue a statement that the US ‘deeply regrets’ the development, while noting India's reaffirmation of its commitment not to use nuclear energy for military purposes, we nonetheless considered this an ‘unfortunate step.’”¹¹⁶

The statement that was released reflects Nixon and Kissinger’s new approach to dealing with India. Kissinger felt “the Indian explosion was an accomplished fact [...] and] public scolding would not undo the event, but only add to US-Indian bilateral problems and reduce the influence of Washington might have on India’s future nuclear policy.”¹¹⁷ Kissinger immediately ordered that Moynihan’s statement be halted and substituted a different response: “The United States has always been against nuclear proliferation for the adverse impact it will have on world stability. That remains our position.”¹¹⁸ Though not any less or more harsh, the response was less particular and was meant to avoid overly-direct criticism of India.

This approach reflects vividly the US administration's realization that it would have to deal with India in a fundamentally new way. In other words, regardless of how Kissinger and Nixon felt personally about India, they understood it was a major force in South Asia and would have to be treated as such. While Nixon and Kissinger remained opposed to communism, and still viewed India unfavorably, they were willing to have

¹¹⁵ Gary K. Bertsch, “Engaging India: US Strategic Relations with the World’s Largest Democracy”, Routledge, 1999, 6

¹¹⁶ Lalit K. Jha, “Kissinger Ordered a Low Key Response to India’s Nuclear Test”, 11 October 2010, <http://news.in.msn.com/international/article.aspx?cp-documentid=4450309>

¹¹⁷ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 315

¹¹⁸ Lalit K. Jha, “Kissinger Ordered a Low Key Response to India’s Nuclear Test”

friendly relations with both communist countries— such as China—and with India, provided that such friendly relations could further US interests. After several decades of historical commentary and documentation, this *realpolitik* approach now seemed like the obvious course of action for a foreign policy that was largely dictated by Kissinger— one of the most well-known adherents of that approach. However we must not forget how radical a departure from previous US policy this was. For Dulles, there was no separating the moral and ideological from the practical. What was morally *right* was right for the country and indeed the world.

However, a *realpolitik* ideology— if such a thing exists— is useless if it is not in the hands of capable diplomats. And indeed we can witness the art of diplomacy in the careful work of Kissinger in the period immediately after the Bangladeshi crisis. Both his reaching out to the Indians for better relations, and his non-confrontational approach to the nuclear issue demonstrate the importance of good diplomacy, regardless of one's agenda. Having identified that the US stance in South Asia was not proving to be effective, Kissinger and Nixon reversed course. How they did it is in many ways just as important as what they did. For, as stated earlier, the actions of the US in the Bangladeshi crisis had little impact on what was happening on the ground. What they did have an impact on, and indeed a very negative impact, was the state of US-Indo relations. Thus, the dispatch of the *USS Enterprise* did not alter the tide of the war, but it did sink relations between the US and India to an all time low. In the final analysis, diplomacy is the vehicle through which a policy manifests itself, and thus, without an effective vehicle, there can be no effective policy.

As fortune would have it, the same year as the Indian explosion, the Nixon administration would crumble under the weight of the Watergate scandal and Nixon was forced to resign in August of 1974. His successor, Gerald Ford was largely ignorant about South Asia and “took his lead from Secretary of State Kissinger.”¹¹⁹

As seen in the period after the Bangladesh crisis, Kissinger clearly was pursuing a new approach toward India in an attempt to improve relations. In order to achieve this he visited India in 1974. “A visit from Henry Kissinger was highly prized as a sign that the host country ‘mattered’ somehow or other in the world. Although the Indians are less easily impressed in such ways than others, they understood that an important signal was being given.”¹²⁰

While little of tangible substance was achieved during this trip, Kissinger clearly saw the need to convey that the US had a basic respect for India. “Secretary of State Kissinger increasingly stressed the importance of India as an important power in South Asia and the need for friendlier relations between both countries [...] In his address to the Indian council of World Affairs he declared; ‘The United States accepts nonalignment.... The size and position of India give it a special role of leadership in South Asia and world affairs.’”¹²¹

This is as clear an indication as any that US policy toward India had undergone a rather enormous shift. As detailed earlier, US-Indo relations during the 1950’s were dominated by a Secretary of State that considered the foundation of Indian foreign policy—nonalignment—to be morally wrong. Kissinger’s declaration of acceptance of

¹¹⁹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 327

¹²⁰ Harold A. Gould, “The Hope and The Reality”, 110

¹²¹ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 141

both nonalignment and a “special role” for India was indeed a true watershed moment. If the Pentagonal Strategy of Kissinger put little importance on the “Third World,” it seemed to be making an exception for India. Soon however, there would be another test of Kissinger’s new approach.

In 1975 Indira Gandhi had a “state of emergency”¹²² declared in India which suspended democracy in the country and gave her the power to rule by decree. This was in response to fairly chaotic year in India's short history as a nation. Widespread political violence-- including riots, and assassinations-- were threatening India's peaceful democratic institutions. Then, in an enormous embarrassment for Gandhi, the Indian Supreme Court ruled that she had won election several years prior through illegal and treacherous means. They then ruled that due to this, she was to be immediately unseated as Prime Minister. Gandhi responded by having the Emergency declared, and then jailing thousands of her political enemies. Essentially, she became the dictator of India.

Many believed that Indian democracy had come to an end and India would simply become another Third World dictatorship.¹²³ Former supporters of India were now largely dismayed, either having given up on the country or close to doing so. Many of these supporters were the same ones that had been so horrified by the nuclear explosion. The *New York Times*, which had previously been a fairly firm supporter of India expressed intense disapproval;

“When the escape valve of a heated boiler is similarly closed for any substantial period, the boiler typically explodes. It is such a devastating economic and political explosion that Mrs. Gandhi risks by throttling expression of opposition views while the factors making for opposition remain untouched.”¹²⁴

¹²² To be referred to simply as “The Emergency” from here on.

¹²³ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 336

¹²⁴ “Indian Boiler”, *New York Times*, 1 July 1975, 28

An even more insulting critique came from former US Ambassador to India, Moynihan who remarked, “When India ceased to be a democracy, our actual interest there just plummeted. I mean, what does it export but communicable disease?”¹²⁵

As with the nuclear incident a year earlier, the response from Washington revealed a much more cautious and sensitive approach toward India. Kissinger once again was the figure who encouraged a highly restrained approach to the Emergency in India. The Secretary of State, “believed that the United States should not base its external relations on whether or not it liked the domestic political character of foreign governments.”¹²⁶ Furthermore, he held the view that “US remonstrances would have no positive effect and would tend to push India closer to the Soviet Union.”¹²⁷ In a conversation with an Indian Ambassador, Kissinger explained, “We have tried as a Government to show restraint. We have not encouraged the press to be critical of India [...] You know intellectuals had a love affair with India. Now there is disappointment. I am not. I have always looked on India as a major power with whom we should have good relations.”¹²⁸

While Kissinger’s assertion that he had “always” thought in such a way are directly contradicted by the evidence, his basic approach seems to have been fairly consistent since the end of the Bangladesh war in 1971. That is to say that he radically changed US policy toward India upon realizing that they were the preeminent regional power. Seeking normalized and decent relations with India, Kissinger put aside

¹²⁵ Playboy Magazine, March 1977, 78

¹²⁶ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 336

¹²⁷ Harold A. Gould, “The Hope and The Reality”, 112

¹²⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume E-7, Document 207

ideology, and resisted popular opinion, in order to move US-Indo relations forward. Some have suggested that Kissinger's approach toward India regarding the nuclear explosion and the Emergency were evidence of his inability to place importance on, or even understand, moral issues. Perhaps in direct response to such accusations, Kissinger remarked to William Saxbe, US Ambassador to India at the time, "morality has nothing to do with things."¹²⁹ This again shows just how much US policy had changed. While Dulles fashioned himself as a moral leader in creating his foreign policy, Kissinger elevated pragmatism above all else. While the Bangladeshi War proved that Kissinger's ideology could be even more damaging than Dulles' to US-Indo relations, it ultimately proved to be far more flexible.

Simultaneously in India, Mrs. Gandhi seemed to be reevaluating her cynicism towards US-Indo relations much the same way Kissinger was doing on the American side. Essentially, Mrs. Gandhi seemed to have felt that while the Indo-Soviet relationship had been quite helpful to India in the past, it would not provide adequate resources in the future. Indian confrontation with the West and China needed to be brought under control if India was going to move forward. "If India were to maintain freedom of maneuver internationally, it needed to reduce the level of tension with the United States, on the one hand, and with China on the other [...] Increasingly, the two sides accepted the fact that their relationship would consist of both positive and negative aspects [...] the relationship was indeed finding maturity."¹³⁰

The 1970's were a remarkably dynamic period in US-Indo relations with the road toward normalization taking place almost immediately after the nadir. It would be a

¹²⁹ Foreign Relations of the United States, Volume E-7, Document 211

¹³⁰ Harold A. Gould, "The Hope and The Reality", 114

mistake however to think that the relationship ever reached a particularly encouraging level during the decade. It remained fragile and largely disappointing. Indeed, by the end of the 1970's it appeared as if the relationship would once again move downward.

CHAPTER IV

The Early Years of the Carter Presidency- Stagnation in US-Indo Relations

At a number of levels, the election of Jimmy Carter seemed like a positive development for US-Indo relations. Carter's mother had served as a Peace Corp volunteer in India and apparently had very fond feelings for the country. Unlike the Nixon-Kissinger pentagonal world order, Carter and his Secretary of State, Zbigniew Brezinski, saw many countries in The Third World, as bound for positions of regional influence. As such, "the overall strategy was to deemphasize Cold War or East-West concerns and to pay more attention to North-South issues, strengthening relations with nations likely to move into positions of prominence."¹³¹ By relying less on Cold War politics to make regional decisions, it appeared that the main sticking point for US-Indo relations— namely, the security politics of previous administrations— would become less irritating to the Indians and thus lead to a more friendly relationship. In his own words, during a speech at Notre Dame in 1977, Carter had this to say:

"Democracy's great recent successes—in India, Portugal Spain, Greece—show that our confidence in this system is not misplaced. Being confident of our own future, we are now free of that inordinate fear of communism which once led us to embrace any dictator who joined us in that fear. I'm glad that that's being changed."¹³²

Indeed, whether inordinate or not, it was the ramifications of fear of communism that had been the largest barrier to good relations between the US and India. If Carter

¹³¹ Dennis H. Kux. 346

¹³² Jimmy Carter, "University of Notre Dame—Address at Commencement Exercises at the University." 22 May 1977, The American Presidency Project, www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7552/

truly believed that the US had been freed from such fear, it would be nothing less the removal of that barrier. Developments in India also appeared to signal a potential upturn in US-Indo affairs.

Roughly coinciding with the election of Jimmy Carter, Indira Gandhi suddenly lifted the Emergency, returning India to democracy and parliamentary elections. The lifting of the Emergency was uniformly positive for US-Indo relations. Indeed, Carter's aforementioned overall strategy for foreign policy, "seemed just the ticket for an improvement in relations with India—except for one thing: Gandhi's continued trampling of the human rights of the Indian People [during the Emergency]."¹³³ Carter had been very critical of Nixon, Ford and indeed Kissinger's policy of *realpolitik*. As quoted earlier, by the mid 1970s, Kissinger was willing to openly declare that, "morality has nothing to with things." To Carter the precise opposite was true. "Carter's thinking was not far from that of liberal Congressman Donald Fraser, who declared in hearing just after the inauguration, that the United States ought to avoid 'endorsing implicitly or otherwise India's suspension of civil rights.'"¹³⁴ This of course would lead to considerable animosity with Mrs. Gandhi and her Emergency. Her defeat in the Indian elections of 1977 avoided this collision. The end of the Emergency was beneficial for US-Indo relations in a two-fold manner; it removed a potential conflict with the Carter administration's focus on human rights, and it removed India's most anti-American Prime Minister—Mrs. Gandhi of course. A further positive development was the new Prime Minister, Morarji Desai.

¹³³ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 156-7

¹³⁴ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 345

Morarji Desai was eighty-one years old when he took office. He had a long history of animosity towards Indira Gandhi going back several decades. In addition to his age, his most noticeable feature was his having been a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. This meant he had a, “genuine concern for the principles of human rights, democracy, disarmament and the economic growth of developing countries.”¹³⁵ Jimmy Carter, of course, shared these concerns. Furthermore, Desai had been very critical of Indira Gandhi’s leanings toward the Soviet Union. He believed that Mrs. Gandhi had essentially made a mockery of her father’s policy of non-alignment. Desai wanted to return to a much purer form of non-alignment. So far as the US was concerned, in the zero-sum game of Cold-War politics, a move away from the USSR was a move towards the US. And this was indeed what Desai wished to achieve. He recognized that in order to cultivate a good relationship with the US, he needed to simultaneously distance India from the USSR. In simple terms, this meant friendly relations with both Moscow and Washington; not friendly ties with one to spite the other—essentially the policy of Mrs. Gandhi. As with Carter in the US, political developments in India appeared to signal a new and positive phase in US-Indo relations.

Lurking in the background of all these positive developments were serious issues that would ultimately lead to stagnation and eventually decline in US-Indo relations. Despite the reasons to be optimistic about Carter’s worldviews regarding India, there were also reasons to be pessimistic. Carter’s moralistic approach to foreign policy often came at the expense of pragmatism. He was fundamentally unwilling to abandon his principles even if the results were ultimately negative. Though Carter and Dulles were

¹³⁵ Ibid. , 347

nearly at opposite ends of the political spectrum, their adherence to, and desire to propagate their moralistic philosophies is strikingly similar. And just as with Dulles, Carter's moralistic approach predictably led to a downward turn in US-Indo relations. The clearest example of the failure of Carter's moralistic foreign policy was the issue of the Indian Nuclear reactor at Tarapur. But how did a power plant in western India become a major obstacle for friendship between the world's two largest democracies? To answer this, it is necessary to examine briefly the history of the Tarapur reactor.

In 1953, Eisenhower gave a speech at the UN General Assembly titled "Atoms for Peace." The speech sought to first declare the tremendous danger that nuclear weapons posed to every nation and individual on earth. It then progressed to outline a US policy that called for the establishment of an international atomic energy agency, which would then help countries develop strictly peaceful atomic energy programs. Or in Eisenhower's own words,

"The more important responsibility of this atomic energy agency would be to devise methods whereby this fissionable material would be allocated to serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind. Experts would be mobilized to apply atomic energy to the needs of agriculture, medicine and other peaceful activities. A special purpose would be to provide abundant electrical energy in the power-starved areas of the world."¹³⁶

One of the "power-starved areas of the world" was India. Ten years later, in 1963, Eisenhower's policy was realized when the US and India concluded an agreement resulting in the construction of the Tarapur Atomic Power Station near Mumbai in western India.¹³⁷ In effect, the agreement was that the US would supply the Tarapur reactor with enriched uranium for 30 years, in exchange for Indian acceptance of

¹³⁶ Dwight D. Eisenhower, "Atoms for Peace", 8 December 1953, Available at http://www.iaea.org/About/history_speech.html

¹³⁷ Sam P. Limaye, "US-Indian Relations: The Pursuit of Accommodation" (Westview Press, 1993), 93

safeguards that none of the nuclear material would be diverted for other uses. The agreement was hailed as a demonstration of peaceful nuclear cooperation.¹³⁸

A major dispute in nuclear policy began soon after however. The first negative development centered on the 1968 Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). The Indians refused to sign it because they considered it unfair, and discriminatory. For example, they regarded as particularly odious the fact the Chinese were one of the five in the “nuclear club,” while India (and the rest of the world) would never be permitted to become nuclear weapons states (NWS). After all, they were both Third World, Asian countries and to add injury to this insult, India and China had just recently fought a war against each other.

To be fair to both sides—the US and India—the treaty was a fundamental disagreement over foreign policy with each side’s position being totally within its own interests. The problem was that they were entirely incompatible. “For the US, it made eminent sense to try and prevent the spread of nuclear weapons and restrict their ownership to a ‘manageable’ number of countries—including, of course, itself.”¹³⁹ This had nothing to offer India except strategic weakness, especially vis-à-vis China. It is also worth noting that from a detached, objective standpoint, the treaty *is* discriminatory. It calls for a wide range of controls and regulations over non-nuclear weapons states’ (NNWS) atomic programs that are not required for nuclear weapons states’ programs. To

¹³⁸ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 181

¹³⁹ Ibid. , 94

name just one example, NNWS are strictly forbidden from carrying out *peaceful nuclear explosions*, while an NWS may carry out one out without any restrictions.¹⁴⁰

The major international organization tasked with enforcing the NPT was the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In 1969, the Tarapur reactor became operational and two years later in 1971, both sides agreed that the IAEA would enforce the safeguards for Tarapur set in the *original 1963 treaty*. The real split in US-Indo nuclear cooperation concerning Tarapur came in 1978 when the US Congress passed a law (the Nuclear Nonproliferation Act or NNPA) that essentially required India to accept the conditions of the NPT in order to continue receiving fuel for the Tarapur reactor.¹⁴¹ Of course, the Indians had never agreed to, and refused to sign the NPT. To India, this was a clear violation of the agreement they had signed in 1963. And they were correct; it was precisely that. “The US sought to get from India what it had been unable to a decade earlier.” In doing so, “the US attempted to impose upon India its conception of world order, foreign policy, and security by attempting to change the already agreed upon rules of their bilateral [agreement of 1963....] India naturally rejected this attempt.”¹⁴²

In a fascinating demonstration of incompetence, Carter signed the bill knowing full well that it would lead to a mess of legal contradictions for the US’ supply commitments (such as the one with India for Tarapur). To show this awareness, “the administration tried but failed to gain acceptance for an exemption for existing contracts from the new full scope safeguard requirement.”¹⁴³ In essence, Carter supported

¹⁴⁰ “The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), 1968, Available at <http://www.un.org/en/conf/npt/2010/npttext.shtml>

¹⁴¹ Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations”, 96

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 97

¹⁴³ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 181

continuing exports to India for the Tarapur reactor, then supported and signed a bill making that impossible. Prime Minister Desai's position was clear: if the US failed to supply the uranium it agreed to supply in the 1963 treaty, India would consider the treaty null and void and thus would be free to operate Tarapur in any way they saw fit. In other words, India would no longer be bound to operate under the safeguards. Thus as concerned India, the NNPA would have the opposite effect of its intentions; it would encourage proliferation, lift safeguards, and reduce American influence over India's nuclear ambitions.

Carter's moralistic approach to nonproliferation became a tangled mess of contradictory policies. Philosophically he supported the NNPA while pragmatically supporting the original 1963 Tarapur agreement; an untenable policy. In fact, in a bizarre twist, the myopic lens through which the US viewed foreign policy in South Asia switched from Soviet containment—and thus the politics of security—to nuclear nonproliferation. Carter “endeavor[ed] to depart from Kissingeresque real politik and initiate a genre of moral politics [that...] focused almost exclusively on nuclear proliferation.”¹⁴⁴ Of course, just like Dulles' (and others') security politics, viewing an entire subcontinent—several thousand miles away, with hundreds of millions of people, and innumerable problems—through a single lens is inevitably going to lead to contradictions, problems and probably poor relations with the region. In the 1950s Dulles has divided the world into the nations of goodness, freedom and Christian values versus those of evil, despotism and atheism. The dramatically ironic corollary of this in South Asia was to aggressively support the murderous, despotic, Islamic country of

¹⁴⁴ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 68

Pakistan and despise the free and democratic country of India. Now, in the late 1970s, Carter chose to view the world in no less moralistic terms that centered on nuclear proliferation. And once again, US foreign policy towards South Asia became no less ironic and contradictory.

The Tarapur issue was not the only one that arose during the first two years of the Carter Presidency, and it would be a mistake to say that it led to a “decline” in US-Indo relations. It was probably the central factor however in the stagnation of what, since the end of the Bangladeshi crisis had been an upward trend in the two countries’ relationship. It is also particularly helpful in demonstrating the basic incompetence of the Carter administration’s dealings with South Asia. However, by the end of the Carter Presidency, much more ominous developments appeared on the horizon of the US-Indo relationship.

CHAPTER V

The Dawn of the 1980s & Dark Beginnings- The Return of Indira and the Crisis in Afghanistan

As the 1980s dawned it appeared as if forces in the US, India and around the world were converging to eliminate any hope of friendship in US-Indo relations. Ronald Reagan was considered by many to be the most conservative US President in fifty years. A fact that, if true, seemed to indicate a return to the sort of moralistic, power politics that had been so devastating to US-Indo relations. In India, Indira Gandhi returned to power. She, as we have seen not only had strong anti-US feelings, but had also ruled India during the lowest point in US-Indo relations. Added to all this was the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet Forces, a development that brought the Cold War to India's neighborhood as it had never been before. It appeared as if the prognosis for US-Indo relations was dark indeed. As both sides seemed poised to revert back to the moralistic and ideological Puritanism which had been so intensely harmful to bilateral cooperation, an all together different reality emerged. Both of the countries instead opted for a pragmatic political strategy that signaled an understanding of the need for *realpolitik*. Yet, it should not be forgotten how unlikely this eventual reality seemed in the lead up to the 1980s. To begin with, an examination of Indian politics at the time will help to clarify how the Indian element in the equation had shifted.

In 1980, Indira Gandhi made a remarkable return to power. After having ruled over India with an iron fist during the Emergency, Indira was voted out of office then arrested and tried for a variety of crimes during that period. This was essentially a

political maneuver by her political enemies in parliament. It not only failed to produce a conviction, but the publicity of the trial also generated an enormous amount of sympathy and renewed support for Indira amongst the masses of India's population. Mrs. Gandhi took advantage of this and began, once again, her climb to the top. The campaign she choose to run was important for the study of US-Indo relations. Though she was already well on her way to regaining the office of Prime Minister, she chose to bash Washington during her ascent. Indeed, "in the campaign that ensued, Gandhi made the most of charges in a recent book about the CIA, published in the United States [...] to the effect that the CIA during the early 1970s had successfully planted an agent in the Indian cabinet."¹⁴⁵ Whether true or not, the charges—especially when leveled my Mrs. Gandhi—were clearly meant to incite anti-American sentiments. Furthermore, Mrs. Gandhi accused Mr. Desai—the Prime Minister during most of Carter's presidency—as being too soft on the US. In broad terms Mrs. Gandhi claimed that, "she would rectify Desai's errors in foreign policy, starting with his treatment of the United States."¹⁴⁶ Again, this was a transparent attempt to appeal to, and heighten anti-American feelings in India.

When elections were held early in January of 1980, the Congress party won a landslide victory, and Indira Gandhi, once again became Prime Minister of India¹⁴⁷. Given her past, and the campaign she chose to run, this could not have been interpreted as anything except for a foreboding development as regards US-Indo relations.

¹⁴⁵ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 164

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ John Keay, "India: A History", 527

While Kissinger had employed pragmatic restraint in response to disturbing trends in India during the 1970s, the return of Gandhi could not have been viewed as a positive development for US-Indo relations. As documented earlier, Ms. Gandhi harbored considerable resentment for the United States. Indeed it was Indira who ruled over India during the lowest point in US-Indo relations (the Bangladeshi crisis.) While relations between India and the US had improved considerably since their nadir in the early 1970s, this was more out of necessity than from an increase of mutual feelings of friendship. And to put it simply, whatever friendship had existed was seemingly replaced by hostility in the figure of Indira Gandhi.

Whatever suspicion and resentment Indira had for the US, the most prominent development possibly in the history of US-Indo relations were actions taken not by either country, but rather by the USSR. About a week before Indira returned to the office of Prime Minister, the world was shocked by the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union¹⁴⁸. While US-Indo relations had frequently been plagued by the so-called “politics of security,” the introduction of the Soviet Army into India’s neighborhood would clearly exacerbate this issue immensely. The US, it would seem, would now feel a greater sense of urgency to arm Pakistan.

It is important to note however that at this point in history, US-Pakistani relations were fairly frigid as well. During the previous decade, the normalization of US-Indo relations provided the first impetus to a plunge in relations between the US and Pakistan. Indeed, as noted, Pakistan’s prime reason for cooperation with the US was not to help in the battle against communism, but rather to secure massive military aid for their anti-

¹⁴⁸ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 366

Indian agenda. This of course was an enormous sticking point for US-Indo relations—something the Pakistanis exploited incessantly. Thus when the US took a more neutral stance in South Asia, the Pakistanis essentially viewed this as an insult and a loss. Carter’s moralistic approach to non-proliferation, coupled with Pakistani efforts to acquire the ability to produce nuclear weapons led to a further decline in US-Pakistani relations that culminated in Carter’s suspension of all aid to Pakistan in the 1970s.¹⁴⁹ Thus, the United States’ security politics were at a fairly bizarre phase in late 1979 when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. On one hand the US had never really abandoned its desire to have the Pakistanis be a militarized “frontline state,” while on the other it vehemently opposed Pakistan’s acquisition of nuclear weapons. Apparently then, Pakistan was only to be a conventionally armed frontline state, not a nuclear one. Pakistan disagreed. Ever since India had initiated its own nuclear program, and perhaps before, the Pakistanis had become obsessed with the concept of an “Islamic bomb,” to counter the “Hindu bomb” of India.¹⁵⁰ This was both an issue of religious-national pride and what Pakistan considered to be its very survival. Since India had soundly defeated the Pakistani military three times in strictly conventional wars, the nuclear edge took on a special place in the Pakistani military elite’s paranoia of their massive neighbor-enemy. In any case, the issue had proved to be fairly disastrous for US-Pakistani relations. Thus when the Soviets invaded, it was unclear how the US-Pakistani relationship would be affected.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. , 362

¹⁵⁰ David Armstrong; Joseph John Trento “America and the Islamic Bomb: The Deadly Compromise” (Steerforth Press, 2007),165.

Even when the Soviets were not in Afghanistan, Dulles and others had become convinced that Pakistan was a frontline state in regards to communism. With the presence of a seemingly new expansionist-minded, Soviet military presence now on Pakistan's borders, the idea of Pakistan being a frontline state took on a new meaning and urgency. Essentially, US policy makers became convinced that Pakistan was going to require enormous American military aid to resist and prevent the further spread of communism into South Asia. Indeed, once the Soviet invasion was under way, "the impact on US policy toward South Asia was immediate. The day after Soviet intervention, President Carter picked up the telephone to speak with Pakistan's President Zia-ul-Haq to offer US support."¹⁵¹

Carter then dispatched a US team of diplomats to Islamabad in an attempt to reinvigorate US-Pakistani relations. The initial US offer made was "USD 400 million worth of 'immediate assistance' as an inducement to strengthen their frontier forces." The leader of Pakistan, "General Zia sniffed at this, calling it 'peanuts,' because he rightly saw it as an opportunity to resuscitate the old policy model from which the Pakistani elite had so handsomely profited throughout the Cold War."¹⁵² From the Pakistani perspective, General Zia was right—Pakistan could and did obtain far more than the initial US offer. Indeed, "over the course of the next several years, Zia received billions of dollars of American economic and military assistance [...] Recognizing his country's importance to the United States, Zia set his price high [and] He got it."¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 366.

¹⁵² Harold A. Gould, "The South Asia Story", 72

¹⁵³ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 167

It is beyond the bounds of this study to dissect to what degree the Pakistanis were legitimately worried about the Soviets and to what degree they simply wished to build up their military capabilities for further conflict with India. In either case, the effect was essentially the same in that Pakistan was once again to be the recipient of enormous US military aid and technology. As has been witnessed throughout the US-Indo relationship, India has never bought into the US argument that its military aid to Pakistan is strictly for the fight against communism, and never for use against India. They were of course not incorrect in their suspicion and antipathy to this idea; India had seen US arms—supposedly for use against communists—used against its military when war had broken out between itself and Pakistan. The Soviet presence did little to change the Indian position. From its perspective, “substantial US military aid to Pakistan,” was more alarming than “the presence of the Soviets in Afghanistan.”¹⁵⁴ To be fair, the late Carter administration did dispatch a team of diplomats to New Delhi. It proved to be a total failure however. The diplomats completely failed to understand the Indian position, or to communicate their own stance. The crux of their message to India was that it ought to be clear why they were giving so much aid to Pakistan, and if necessary they would extend an equally lucrative package to India. This completely ignored and discounted the Indian position that more weapons on the subcontinent was the greatest threat to security, not the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Indeed the Indians were “taken aback” by the US message and how it was delivered.¹⁵⁵ The Indian diplomats, for their part, did not even know to whom they were talking. Clark Clifford, a Presidential advisor to Carter, and one of the highest ranking diplomats on the trip, was a complete stranger to the Indians

¹⁵⁴ Srinivas Chary, “The Eagle and the Peacock”, 153

¹⁵⁵ Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 74

who received him. In fact, an observer at the time recalls that after Clifford left New Delhi, “the External Affairs minister asked me who Clark Clifford was, and appeared to be unclear about his actual political importance.”¹⁵⁶ To put it simply, both sides appear to have patently failed from a diplomatic perspective.

The Indian government maintained that the best way to keep South Asia stable and peaceful was by employing “measures that prevented any further introduction of arms into the Subcontinent.”¹⁵⁷ In essence then, the two countries could not have been further apart in their assessment of US policy in response to the issue of Afghanistan. The US saw the paramount need to further militarize South Asia while the Indians saw no need for a single extra bullet anywhere on the Subcontinent. As before, the disagreement quickly descended into contempt. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan, it would seem, was to become another major stumbling block for friendly US-Indo ties.

With this backdrop, the stage moved to the United Nations where the issue was the focus of the 1980 UN assembly. The US position was, of course, to intensely condone the actions of the USSR. For example, during one speech a US diplomat asserted that, “No state would be safe against a larger neighbor if the international community appears to condone the Soviet Union’s intervention.”¹⁵⁸ Then, in one of the most lopsided votes in the history of the UN General Assembly, the member nations voted 104-18 to condone the actions of the Soviets in Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹ The Indians were

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. , 73

¹⁵⁸ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 367

¹⁵⁹ “UN General Assembly Votes to Protest Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan”, *Toledo Blade*, January 15th, 1980

called up to make a statement regarding the issue. The one they made was aggressively supportive of the Soviets:

“The Soviet government has assured our government that its troops went to Afghanistan first at the request of the Afghan Government [...] And we have been further assured that Soviet troops will be withdrawn when requested to do so by the Afghan Government. We have no reason to doubt assurances, particularly from a friendly country like the Soviet Union with whom we have many close ties.”¹⁶⁰

The US was thoroughly shocked and outraged when they learned of the Indian response. While no one on the US side expected the Indians to adopt a hard-line, anti-Soviet position, they were stunned to hear such a defense of the Soviet Invasion.

According to one US diplomat, “The statement hit people like a ton of bricks. When we first heard the wholesale acceptance of the Soviet line, we just couldn’t believe it.”¹⁶¹ In further statements India largely refused to back away from its initial position. Indeed, “the most the Indian side would say was that they ‘regretted’ what had taken place and hoped for a ‘peaceful resolution.’”¹⁶²

In taking such positions, India had radically distanced itself from not just the US but also from the vast majority of the international community. While it could have simply refrained from actively condemning the Soviet actions, it decided instead to endorse them. It stood apart from the world and with the Soviets. This was a miscalculated and foolish error by India; such a stance had virtually nothing to offer the Indians in terms of national self-interest. Whatever their relationship with the Soviets, the benefits were not going to be increased by such a position on Afghanistan. And even if they were, the damage it did to India’s relationships with most of the rest of the world

¹⁶⁰ Reported in, *India Today*, 18 January 1980

¹⁶¹ *Private interview of Harold H. Kux with India Country Director for US Department of State Howard Schaffer*, 17 December 1990

¹⁶² Harold A. Gould, “The South Asia Story”, 74

would easily outweigh those benefits. In fact, India's increasingly obvious leanings toward Moscow only further accelerated American intentions to further militarize Pakistan. To offset this, the Indians eventually ended up purchasing large amounts of weapons from the USSR.¹⁶³ Thus their policy that the Subcontinent should remain free from the Soviet-US maneuvers was a miserable failure: the Soviet Army was in Afghanistan, the Pakistanis were receiving massive aid from the US, and India was militarizing in response. If India truly believed that non-alignment was her best option, she had critically failed in the pursuit of it. And as regards US-Indo relations, India seemed to be in its most hostile stance since the Bangladeshi Crisis—that lowest point in all of the US-Indo relationship.

This was once again poor diplomacy on both sides. Mrs. Gandhi's insistence on demonizing the US had little utility. While it might have gotten her some momentum during her campaign, it was not necessary, as she would have won without it. Like so much of her antipathy towards the US, it served her own personal agenda, but not that of the country she was ruling over. India's response to the renewed US interest in Pakistan was also counterproductive and pedantic. In reality, by the late 1970s, India no longer feared the Pakistani military threat.¹⁶⁴ After all they had thoroughly defeated the Pakistanis several times before. Their real concern was a perceived disrespect for India's preeminence on the Subcontinent. "The standard Indian [...] response on arms to Pakistan made this clear— 'neither the quality nor the quantity of the arms mattered; it was the attitude that caused concern.'"¹⁶⁵ By finding a way to be insulted by an American

¹⁶³ H.W. Brands, "India and the United States", 168

¹⁶⁴ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 370

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

policy that was not at all intended to be anti-Indian, the Indians further isolated themselves from a position in which they could stem the tide of these arm shipments. In essence, to protest that Washington was not taking India into consideration, India pushed Washington further away from taking India into consideration. Again, this can only be viewed as poor diplomacy. For its part, the US did not manage the situation particularly well either. By failing to understand the dynamics of the Indo-Pakistani relationship, they continually irritated India far more than was necessary. A more enlightened policy would have been to communicate clearly to New Delhi the reasons for, and the intentions of American policies on the Subcontinent. This is not to suggest that the Indians ever failed to understand these policies. What it does suggest is that they are particularly sensitive about what they perceive as disrespect and being slighted. In fact, as already noted, their official response stated clearly that it was not American policy that they were so irritated by in the late 1970s, it was the attitude with which it was being conducted.

CHAPTER VI

The Rise of Reagan & The Path Towards Friendship

Ronald Reagan was considered to be an extremely conservative politician when he entered the White House in 1981. Over the course of his career Reagan had delivered a number of speeches that seemed to ring of the moralistic tone to foreign policy that had been so damaging to US-Indo relations under John Dulles. In a speech in 1964 he insisted “We are faced with the most evil enemy mankind has known in his long climb from the swamp to the stars [...] We must have the courage to do what we know is morally right.”¹⁶⁶ In another speech he remarked “I still think that [...] morality should always be an issue in government.”¹⁶⁷ Kissinger of course dismissed morality and used such an approach to revitalize, to some extent, US-Indo relations. In 1981 it would have seemed reasonable to wonder if Reagan’s moralistic idealism would not farther damage already gloomy relations.

Reagan spoke frequently about the evil nature of US adversaries and his desire to see the US reclaim military preeminence. During his campaign to be elected president he seemed to advocate a confrontational style to dealing with the USSR. In a speech in 1978 he said that in Rhodesia he would tell the Soviets “to get lost or risk pressures elsewhere that they won’t like.”¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ Ronald Reagan, “Modern History Sourcebook”, “A Time for Choosing Speech (1964), <http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/reference/timechoosing.html>

¹⁶⁷ Ronald Reagan, 3 February 1967,

<http://www.reagan.utexas.edu/archives/speeches/govspeech/02031967a.htm>

¹⁶⁸ Ronald Reagan, “Americas Purpose in the World”, 1978, http://reagan2020.us/speeches/Americas_World_Purpose.asp

While a complete ideological analysis of Reagan is not particularly useful here, the basic point is that in 1981 he seemed to be a conservative ideologue to his Indian audience. “Perhaps most alarming for India [...] was the dogmatism which appeared to characterize administration thinking. This was expressed in a series of provocative statements [...] Foremost was the Reagan administration’s talk of American values. Deeply rooted as these were in the Western Judeo-Christian tradition, and contrary to so much of the background in the larger part of the world, there could not but have been some trepidation about the re-assertion of American moralism in the style of the of the Dulles-Eisenhower years.”¹⁶⁹

While Nixon and Kissinger have also been considered “cold warriors,” as described earlier they envisioned a sort of balance of power spread over the globe. To them, Russia, China and indeed communism in general were facts of life and they acted accordingly. As has been seen this did not mean they were content to sit idly and acquiesce in this, but rather that they saw the world as necessarily having more than one power, and one belief system. To them, the strategy was to replace the ideology of figures like John Dulles with a more traditional notion of powers competing with each other for prominence in world affairs. Reagan’s approach was inherently different. Reagan wanted “negotiations from strength, liberation as well as mere containment: these were notions reminiscent of [...] John Foster Dulles. And one of the themes for the interpretations of the Reagan administration’s foreign policy in its first year was that of a

¹⁶⁹ Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations”, 20

return to the simplicities of the Cold War: the Soviet Union was an adversary not an adversary-partner.”¹⁷⁰

Indira Gandhi’s return to power meant that India once again had a leader that was fundamentally suspicious, perhaps even resentful of the US. “The implications of [...] Reagan foreign policy were naturally disconcerting to New Delhi which not only rejected some of the values America wanted to perpetuate but which viscerally resented American dominance.”¹⁷¹

The Reagan administration seemed to have little respect for the Third World and often viewed it as a nuisance. “Multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations with its third world majority and international financial institution, were considered worse than irrelevant—forums for bailing out bad Third World debts with American taxpayers’ money and for beating up on the United States.”¹⁷² Almost by definition this offended India, a leading member of the Third World, and seemed bound to sink already flimsy US-Indo relations. Furthermore, the Reagan administration in its earliest phases considered India, especially under Mrs. Gandhi as firmly within the Soviet camp—and considering their statement concerning the Soviet invasion at the UN, it is not entirely confusing as to why Reagan thought that way. “The Reaganites viewed Indira Gandhi as an apologist for Moscow”¹⁷³, and they “viewed India as a supporter of the Soviet camp.”¹⁷⁴ In reflection of these convictions and their basic approach to the Soviet Union, Reagan considerably increased the amount of aid that the US would send to Pakistan to

¹⁷⁰ R.J. Vincent, “The Reagan Administration and America’s Purpose in the World”, *The Year Book of World Affairs*, Stevens & Sons, 1984, P. 25

¹⁷¹ Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations”, 20

¹⁷² Terry L Deibel, “Reagan’s Mixed Legacy”, *Foreign Policy*, Summer, 1989, 38

¹⁷³ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 380

¹⁷⁴ P.M. Kamath, “Indo-US Relations”, 45

3.2 billion dollars and allowed for the sale of forty F-16 fighter planes, probably the most controversial element for the Indians.¹⁷⁵

Despite this backdrop, with the benefit of hindsight it is clear that fairly early in the 1980s, things would begin to improve. While Mrs. Gandhi always had a penchant for criticism of the US, she seemed to have realized that the USSR could not provide India with the kind of assistance it would need in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Mrs. Gandhi made a number of moves to separate herself from the USSR. For instance she made several statements and overtures that appeared to be an indication she was backing off of the aforementioned 1980 UN statement. Upon returning to power she “chose to visit Washington before Moscow despite standing Kremlin invitations.”¹⁷⁶ Once there she said “We are friends with Soviet Union, although people have tended to read much more in our treaty of friendship and cooperation. We do not agree with everything the Soviets do. We do not approve of the communist system. We are having difficulties with our communists and Marxists within India.”¹⁷⁷

Such a statement could easily be mistaken in a modern perspective as hardly worth mentioning. However the fact is that Mrs. Gandhi’s willingness to publically criticize the Soviets in Washington was significant in that it marked a departure from her earlier rhetoric and behavior. While US-Indo relations in 1981 remained fundamentally poor, the important thing is to notice is that India was making serious overtures to the US. In a later, more obvious invitation for cooperation between the two countries Mrs. Gandhi had this to say: “No two countries can have the same angle of vision [...] each

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations “, 28

¹⁷⁷ “India will stick to Non-Alignment Policy”, Royal Institute for International Affairs, 24 March 1982

can try to appreciate the points of views of the others. Our effort should be to find a common area [...] on which to building and to increase cooperation.”¹⁷⁸

In late 1981 a major summit was held in Cancun, Mexico to discuss how the world economy would move from the late 20th century into the 21st century. Both Mrs. Gandhi and President Reagan attended. The two countries, as alluded to earlier, had strongly opposing views. Reagan had little interest in helping the Third World, which from his perspective the US had wasted considerable money on and was generally anti-American. Mrs. Gandhi on the other hand “pressed for concessions on debt, aid, and trade policy [...] vigorously supporting the call for a [...] new world economic order that would favor the developing world.”¹⁷⁹

This was perhaps as great as any a demonstration of Mrs. Gandhi’s comment that “no two countries can have the same angle of vision.” Given these diametrically opposed worldviews, one would expect the two leaders to have gotten along poorly. The result was the opposite. Reagan and Mrs. Gandhi had a private meeting and got along quite well. What was actually said is not known but “the two apparently discussed little of substance during this get-together,” however “the personal chemistry between the Prime Minister and the President was positive. When word of this spread in Washington and New Delhi, the Indo-American diplomatic atmosphere began to improve.”¹⁸⁰ In a National Security Directive from 1984 we can see that Reagan’s administration placed

¹⁷⁸ R. Chakrapani, “US-Indo Relations Acquiring a New Tone”, *The Hindu*, 31 July 1982

¹⁷⁹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 386

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.* , 387

significance on this as it states, “we have enjoyed some success un improving relations with India beginning with the 1981 Cancun Summit.”¹⁸¹

Of course it would be a mistake to think that a brief meeting in Cancun would be capable of surmounting enormous differences on major geo-political issues. However, what the Cancun summit seems to indicate is that while Reagan and Mrs. Gandhi were both formidable leaders with potent ideological convictions, a fundamentally new approach was emerging between the two countries. We have seen that Nixon and Kissinger reversed their approach in backing off from a directly confrontational style that appeared to view India as an enemy—or at least an obstacle to US interests. They decided that relations had to be normalized and actively sought to accomplish this. It was under the Reagan administration and its counterpart in New Delhi—the Mrs. Gandhi led government—that a true understanding began to develop. It was more accommodation than close friendship that was sought during this period. Both countries realized that, as Mrs. Gandhi put it, they would never be able to see eye to eye on everything. They sought instead to understand the other side’s position, and even when disagreements arose realized that they did not necessarily have to stem from animosity but rather from vastly different national circumstances.

This understanding was demonstrated via the shift in India’s perception of US aid to Pakistan. It has been seen over and over that since India’s independence, US aid to Pakistan has been viewed as a direct affront and threat to India. At times, such as in the Bangladesh war, they were right. However in the 1980s, for whatever reasons, India seems to have taken Reagan seriously in his assertion that US aid to Pakistan was in

¹⁸¹ National Security Decision Directive 147, 11 October 1984

reaction to fears about Soviet expansionism and not simply to have a well armed, pro-American force in South Asia.¹⁸² Finally, in regards to Pakistan, India for whatever reason gained considerable confidence in its ability to deal with its neighbor-enemy. According to one US diplomat “India has gained experience on the international stage including [...] much greater self-confidence about dealing with Pakistan militarily.”¹⁸³

The Reagan administration was integral to this. While previous Presidents have treated Pakistan as a “front-line State,” Reagan believed that overall stability was required to further US regional interests that were centered on weakening the Soviet threat. As Reagan’s 1984, National Security Directive puts it,

“the Soviet expansionary thrust into Afghanistan [...] have heightened the strategic significance of the South Asian region [...] Enhanced US relations with India and Pakistan [...] would weaken Soviet influence in the Subcontinent [...] Conversely, severe internal instability in Pakistan or India [...] would have serious adverse consequences for Western interests.”¹⁸⁴

At the heart of disappointing US-Indo relations has always been the issue of Pakistan. With few exceptions, it has been the policy of the US to arm Pakistan in order to have a friendly South Asian force capable of defending US interests. As Pakistan and India have been in almost perpetual conflict since their partition in 1947, this has always been irritating to India. If it is indeed true that India began in the 1980s to see the US-Pakistan relationship as neither anti-Indian, nor such that it would ever tip the balance of power to Pakistan on the Subcontinent then an immensely damaging issue for US-Indo relations was being minimized. This along with the previously mentioned Indian distancing from the USSR, and Mrs. Gandhi and President Reagan’s mannerly

¹⁸² Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations”, 30-32

¹⁸³ Leo Rose, “US-Indian Relations and South Asian regional issues”. *US-Pakistan Relations*, 1984, 162

¹⁸⁴ National Security Decision Directive 147, 11 October 1984

relationship, was causing the US-Indo relationship to significantly improve. Reagan's desire to see more friendly relations with India obviously helped as well. "India's fears, first raised in the 1970s and renewed in the early 1980s that US ties with Pakistan and China would develop into a tripartite anti-Indian axis were [...] subsiding."¹⁸⁵ During the early 1980s the Pakistanis also realized that they were not going to be able to successfully deal militarily in their issues with India. They had tried three times to challenge India militarily, twice with significant amounts of US weaponry and failed miserably in all three cases.¹⁸⁶ Thus they too began to shift their policy on the Subcontinent.

India wished to distance itself from the USSR for a number of reasons. Likely the most important was India's desire for highly advanced technology for a range of different purposes. India was "placing priority on the indigenous production of high technology [...] and] realized that this access would be dependent upon the overall state of bilateral relations [with the US]."¹⁸⁷ Whatever traditional animus Mrs. Gandhi felt towards the US, she came to the conclusion that her country's best interests were tied with the West, with America as its leader, rather than with the USSR. As Reagan began to deny the Soviets access to Western technologies, it must have become obvious to the Indians that relying on the Soviets for support was increasingly futile.

It should be noted here as well that India was beginning to liberalize its economy in the mid to late 1980s. Since independence, the Indian economy had been very tightly regulated by the government. In certain cases, it was said that a license for production could require the agreement of up to eighty different governmental agencies for example.

¹⁸⁵ Sam P. Limaye, "US-Indian Relations", 31

¹⁸⁶ Dennis H. Kux, "India and the United States", 390

¹⁸⁷ Sam P. Limaye, "US-Indian Relations", 32

Although it was not until 1991 that a massive package of liberalizations was passed by the Indian Parliament, this process of opening up the economy to more capitalism and foreign investment was welcomed in Washington and must also be counted as a reason for the improvement in relations.

Beyond this, Reagan seemed to have campaigned in a more ideological fashion than he assumed once in office. Early in the Reagan administration, India was considered “in the Soviet camp,” and thus essentially an enemy. As time progressed however, it became clear the Indian attitudes concerning the presence of an enormous Soviet military force in or near the Subcontinent were changing. If one believes their 1980 UN statement, they would assume that India either did not care about, or endorsed, the Soviet actions. By 1982 however Mrs. Gandhi told a journalist “We didn’t join the chorus of condemnation, but we do not approve of the Soviet presence there, and we have told them privately, as we have said it publically.”¹⁸⁸ From the Reagan administration came the following analysis of US-Indo relations concerning the Soviet presence in Afghanistan, “Well, clearly we have common goals with respect to ending the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan [...] Really the goals are not different, but the views on the tactics and how to get these basically agreed goals—we have differences.”¹⁸⁹ “The significance of this was [...] the administration moved away from the ideological rigidity with which it viewed Indian foreign policy on the issue.”

As both countries moved encouragingly toward toleration, accommodation and a decent relationship in 1982, the Tarapur issue was effectively resolved. In the early

¹⁸⁸ Ted Szulc, “What Indira Gandhi Wants You to Know”, Parade Magazine, 25 July 1982

¹⁸⁹ Quoted in Sam P. Limaye, “US-Indian Relations”, 34

1980s it seemed the issue would explode into yet another considerable setback for US-Indo relations. In what can only be viewed as a desire of Mrs. Gandhi to move forward in bilateral relations, she definitively announced that decisions regarding Tarapur would have to take into account “the national interest and overall bilateral relations with the US.”¹⁹⁰ The agreement on Tarapur was reflective of each countries’ fundamental desire for improvement. The deal was that the US would drop its demands for extensive safeguards and would back a Franco-Indian deal to supply the reactors.¹⁹¹ Thus the US did not rigidly stick to ideology on nonproliferation and the Indians did not angrily abandon cooperation with the US altogether.

In 1984, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, Indira-Amma¹⁹², one of the faces of modern India was tragically assassinated by her own bodyguards. Almost immediately her son Rajiv Gandhi became the newest Prime Minister of India. Rajiv was not an ordinary Indian politician at the time. He truly represented a generational gap in Indian politics, as he was only three years old when India gained independence and thus had little of the emotional baggage his mother and grandfather had. He also seemed to have none of the austere qualities of his predecessors—he had shown basically no interest in politics until his mother’s death, and was a professional airline pilot known mainly for his good looks.¹⁹³

Rajiv showed a sincere interest for the West, mainly in gaining access to its technology, which he thought would be the future of Indian economic growth. “Little more than a month after Rajiv succeeded his mother, US and Indian negotiators

¹⁹⁰ The Hindu, 23 December 1981

¹⁹¹ Dennis H. Kux, “India and the United States”, 389

^{192C} *Amma* means “mother” in a number of South Asian languages.

¹⁹³ John Keay, “India: A History”, 530

successfully reached an agreement on the technology Memorandum of Understanding.”¹⁹⁴ This was little more than a public commitment to cooperation. Then in 1984, soon after becoming Prime Minister, Rajiv visited Washington in what has been called “diplomacy at the top.”¹⁹⁵

Rajiv’s trip to Washington in 1985 corresponded with his ambitious program to change the Indian economy in an almost Reaganite way. He called for far less interference from the federal government, de-regulation, economic liberalization, and incentives for the private sector.¹⁹⁶ Unlike his mother, Rajiv seemed to enjoy interacting with American diplomats in Washington. “He claimed that he desired no official agreements from the trip but rather only wished to improve relations in general.”¹⁹⁷ “By the time Rajiv left Washington many were declaring that the atmosphere surrounding US-Indo relations had never been better.”¹⁹⁸

The remainder of the 1980s saw the continuation of this upward trend in US-Indo relations. Of course, it was not without setbacks. The difference was that both countries seemed capable of flexibility and finesse in dealing with the setbacks rather than allowing them to become significant, festering issues.

¹⁹⁴ Dennis H. Kux, P. 401

¹⁹⁵ P.M. Kamath, “Indo-US Relations”, 153

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. , 158

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

Conclusion

The concept behind this study was to examine the poor state of US-Indo relations through the examination of certain periods and events during the first forty years after Indian independence. As has been seen, this period was one of intense disappointment when one considers the lofty aspirations and hopes that the two countries had for their relationship in the earliest phase. Certain relationships sour as the result of very profound and fundamental differences in world-views, others because of conflicting needs and occasionally because of maniacal rulers. For instance, there was no peaceful co-existence possible between the US and Nazi Germany, or Napoleonic France and Great Britain. The source of those poor relations and militarized hostilities were a basic inability to get along. India and the US are a somewhat unique example in that it was their rigid ideologies and poor diplomacies that led to a sometimes cold, and sometimes hostile relationship. Studying the diplomatic relations between these two giant democracies is a demonstration oftentimes of how diplomacy can be just as important as basic national interests. To some extent, this relationship has shown the power of people. A handful of individuals on both sides of the equation-- with their various antipathies and personal agendas-- can dictate the state of affairs between two countries with a combined population of well over a billion human beings.

It is my hope that by demonstrating these aforementioned points, India and the US might be able to enter into a far more productive period of relations. Indeed, since the 1980s, the two countries have witnessed an almost unabated improvement in relations. However, the ghosts of the past have never truly disappeared and it continues to be these unfortunate trends that impede a truly healthy and mutually beneficial relationship to this

day. It is, for example, remarkable to what extent the "War on Terror" has smoothly fit into the role left absent by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The US finds itself once again heavily arming Pakistan, and thus irritating India, for vague reasons of US security politics. Those who know South Asia however, generally find US policy fundamentally flawed, and thus the story continues.

India the US need to identify the overwhelming reasons to get along, and stop dictating their policy and diplomacy based on the less important irritations that make the determinants of discord. This is not the story of a particular period, but of a continuing relationship. As such, there can be no real conclusion. It continues to be written as we speak.

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