

A NEW DIRECTION FOR INDIA-U.S. TIES

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: India - USA

The United States under the leadership of President Franklin D. Roosevelt during the early 1940s once pressed Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill to free India and co-opt India as a formal ally in World War II.

But Britain firmly and obstinately refused to agree despite the writing on the wall — that Indians had stood up and would achieve freedom sooner rather than later.

India stabilised after a bloody Partition in 1947, declared its commitment to democracy, fundamental rights, free press and non-violence in a written Constitution which came into force on January 26, 1950.

India thus appeared to the U.S. as worthy of replacing China in the most important body of the United Nations, namely the Security Council, as a Permanent Member with a Veto in view of the Communist overthrow of the Chiang Kai-shek-led government.

According to a recent study by Dr. Anton Harder, [Not at the Cost of China: New Evidence Regarding US Proposals to Nehru for Joining the United Nations Security Council](#) Working Paper #76, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Washington, DC, USA, March 2015, the author states that the U.S.'s offer for India to join the UN Security Council was conveyed by India's Ambassador to the U.S. then, *viz.*, Ms. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Jawaharlal Nehru's sister.

In late August 1950, Mrs. Pandit wrote to her brother from Washington DC that: "One matter... in the State Department should be known to you. This is the unseating of China as a Permanent Member in the Security Council and of India being put in her place."

"Nehru's response to his sister within the week was unequivocal: 'In your letter you mention that the State Department is trying to unseat China as a Permanent Member of the Security Council and to put India in her place.

'So far as we are concerned, we are not going to countenance it. That would be bad from every point of view. It would be a clear affront to China and it would mean some kind of a break between us and China.

'We shall go on pressing for China's admission in the UN and the Security Council. India because of many factors, is certainly entitled to a permanent seat in the security council. But we are not going to at the cost of China'."

Nehru not only declined the U.S. offer to India to become a UNSC Permanent Member with Veto but instead campaigned for China to take up that seat.

Comment | [Nehru, China, and the Security Council seat](#)

The U.S. however resisted that campaign till 1972, when in a turnaround the U.S. supported Communist People's Republic of China and entered into "strategic partnership" in the 1970s onwards with the reform-minded new leadership of Deng Xiaoping.

Subsequently what China did to Nehru for this generosity at India's expense is history from

which we must learn. No use is served by crying about China's betrayal or perfidy.

In 1953 after India's tilt to the Soviet Union and China in the Korean war, the U.S. turned to Pakistan as a possible counterweight in South Asia against the Soviet Union and China. The U.S. made Pakistan a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), and liberally gave aid and armaments.

Pakistan which was no match in military, economic development, and ancient and continuous culture that ensured democracy, began to dream of equality with India in the international domain.

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As a consequence, India had to go to war with Pakistan in 1965, 1971 and 1999, losing precious lives defending our own territory. The U.S. even sent a Seventh Fleet Task Force with nuclear weapons on board to threaten us on the dismemberment of Pakistan.

The rest is history. We have to learn from our past mistakes. Today there is a new opportunity with the U.S. but it is not on a clean slate.

The success of our new bonding with the U.S. will first depend on the outcome of the [U.S. Presidential elections](#) this November. The Democratic party rival and Presidential candidate, Joe Biden, has already taken a hostile stand against our government, with the Left wing and liberals in the U.S. highly critical of the Narendra Modi government, such as rubbishing the [Citizenship \(Amendment\) Act](#) passed by India's Parliament with a two-thirds majority.

In inner U.S. circles our purchase from Russia of the [S-400 air defence missile system](#) and the refusal to agree to America's request to send Indian troops to Afghanistan have mostly browned off U.S. officials. U.S. policy makers know Indians love atmospherics and *melas*, but not substantive issues which concern the U.S.

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Therefore, we need to build trust with the U.S. that we will give to the U.S. as good as it gives us, and not give us lectures instead. The U.S. will then respond more than what we concede.

In 1991 when then Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar told me to find out if we can get a policy-conditions free loan at a concessional interest rate from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), I told him that the IMF would never agree, but since a large size of the voting power in the IMF was directly or indirectly controlled by the U.S., we should placate the U.S.

Thereafter, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar spoke to the U.S. that India would agree to a pending American request with the Prime Minister's Office for permission to refuel their air force planes flying from the Philippines to Saudi Arabia for the first Gulf War when Iraq occupied Kuwait.

I thereafter told the U.S. Ambassador in New Delhi about this but I said it was conditional on getting \$2 billion (1991 prices). Over the weekend that loan arrived and India was saved from a default.

Today, thus, the new or fresh paradigm should be on how to structure India-U.S. understanding and which is in sync with common India-U.S. perspectives. For this structuring we must: first realise that India-U.S. relations require give and take on both sides.

What India needs to take today is for dealing with the Ladakh confrontation on our side of the Line of Actual Control by China. Obviously, India needs U.S. hardware military equipment. India does not need U.S. troops to fight our battles against China on our border.

Comment | [Beijing's Ladakh brinkmanship](#)

Third, the U.S. needs India to fight her enemies in the neighbourhood such as in Afghanistan. It is my view that India should send two divisions gradually to Afghanistan and relieve U.S. troops to go home.

India needs the support of the U.S. and its ally, Israel, in cyberwarfare, satellite mappings of China and Pakistan, intercepts of electronic communication, hard intelligence on terrorists, and controlling the military and the Inter-Services Intelligence in Pakistan.

India needs the U.S. to completely develop the Andaman & Nicobar, and also the Lakshadweep Islands as a naval and air force base, which the U.S. can share along with its allies such as Indonesia and Japan.

India must be firm in two areas which are not amenable to give and take. One is that economic relations must be based on macroeconomic commercial principles. Free, indiscriminate flow of U.S. foreign direct investment (FDI) is not in India's national interest.

Thus, India needs technologies such as thorium utilisation, desalination of sea water, and hydrogen fuel cells, but not Walmart and U.S. universities to start campuses in India, as proposed in the new National Education Policy draft.

Eighth, the U.S. must allow India's exports of agricultural products including *Bos indicus* milk, which are of highly competitive prices in the world.

FDI should be allowed into India selectively from abroad, including from the U.S., based on the economic theory of comparative advantage and not on subsidies and gratis.

Tenth, tariffs of both India and the U.S. should be lowered, and the Indian rupee should be gradually revalued to 35 to a dollar. Later, with the economy picking up, the rupee rate should go below 10 to the dollar.

The other firm constraint is that India should not provide the U.S. with our troops to enter Tibet, or be involved in the Hong Kong and Taiwan issues because there is always a possibility of a leadership change in China, as what happened when Deng Xiaoping replaced Mao Zedong's nominees in 1980. Thus, China's policy changed very favourably towards India. In the cases of Tibet, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, we have made explicit agreements. In the case of Tibet, two formal treaties were signed by [Nehru \(1954\)](#) and [A.B. Vajpayee \(2003\)](#).

In the last point, in the long run, India, the U.S., and China should form a trilateral commitment for world peace provided Chinese current international policies undergo a healthy change.

Dr. Subramanian Swamy is an economist from Harvard and a Rajya Sabha MP, now on his sixth term

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