

SUBJECTIVE PART — PART-II

Q. 2. US India growing strategic partnership is primarily to contain China but it severely hurt the interests of Pakistan too. Critically evaluate the statement and find ways out for Islamabad to follow.

The US perceives the resurgence of China as a threat to its hegemony and the US led rule based global order. China has come second to US in terms of economic growth and foreign exchange reserves, securing its place as the second biggest economy of the world (Forbes, 2023). Therefore, US has adopted a number of measures for containing China such as maintaining its presence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, especially in the Strait of Malacca. This presence is meant to inhibit China's access to the global markets whenever necessary. Therefore, forcing China to look for alternative sea routes to Europe and African markets, for example via CPEC in Pakistan to the Arabian sea and via Russia to the Northern Sea Route in the Arctic.

One such measure which the US has taken to contain Chinese growth is enhancing ties with India, a country which has a history of animosity with China. India and China have fought one war in 1962 and have engaged in a number of border skirmishes over the years, the most recent one was in Ladakh in 2020 in which India faced severe losses. India and China have a number of territories disputed amongst themselves, most significantly Aksai Chin, Arunachal Pradesh and Ladakh. Furthermore, as an emerging economic power itself, India perceives China as an adversary. Therefore, India is a natural ally for the US in the Asia Pacific region to contain rising Chinese influence.

The US revealed its Indo Pacific Economic Framework in 2021, reintroducing the larger Asia Pacific region as the Indo Pacific, underscoring India's importance in the region. This framework proposed a 13-member economic consortium of countries in the Indo-Pacific in order to enhance economic and

cultural ties with the member countries and to counter Chinese influence in the region. India was termed as a “key strategic partner” in the framework. Under the Framework of the Indo Pacific Framework, the US revealed its Indo Pacific strategy in 2023 under the Biden administration. This strategy once again spoke extensively of enhancing economic, military and technological cooperation with India.

In addition to bilateral strategic cooperation between India and the United States, India has also been made a member of the us led strategic security dialogue called the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) which includes, US, India, Japan and Australia. The primary objective behind the creation of QUAD was to enhance ties between the member countries in order to isolate China and to counter Chinese presence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. In March, 2021 QUAD released a joint statement calling for a “free and open Indo-Pacific” and a “rule based maritime order in the South and East China Seas”. This statement was a strategic message countering Chinese claims on territories in South and East Chinese Seas.

This enhanced cooperation between India and the US signals danger for Pakistan which has a history of animosity with neighboring India having fought four wars and multiple border skirmishes over the years on the long-standing dispute of Kashmir. Pakistan and the US have had strong ties since Pakistan’s independence. Pakistan has been a member of US led military alliances SEATO and CENTO and was termed a “key non-NATO ally”. Pakistan and US collaborated to counter the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as well as the threat of Al-Qaeda and other extremist groups during the second Afghan and Iraq war. Pakistan has procured a number of weapon systems from the US for its defense needs to counter the Indian threat, such as the F-16 fighter aircraft. However, with decreasing US interest in Afghanistan and the Middle East and with rising interest in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, the US has started to tilt towards India. Recently, the US stopped the sale of Turkish made T-129 attack helicopters to Pakistan since it contained US manufactured parts. With this enhanced India-US cooperation, India might end up becoming a member of the Nuclear Suppliers Group thus

allowing it to charter a diplomatic course to isolate Pakistan, especially on the matter of Kashmir, which is Pakistan's core foreign policy matter. Under these circumstances Pakistan has increasingly tilted towards China for its economic and military needs. This has resulted in a convergence of interests between China and Pakistan. Under its flagship project the BRI, China has constructed the multi-billion dollar CPEC in Pakistan revamping, Pakistan's road, energy, industry and port infrastructure. China and Pakistan have also cooperated in the realm of military, most significantly China and Pakistan have jointly developed the JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft and Pakistan has procured a number of weapon systems from China such as the J-10 C aircraft and the SP-15 artillery system. Due to these reasons the containment of Chinese influence goes against the interests of Pakistan.

In conclusion, the growing US India strategic partnership gravely harms Pakistan's interests in two ways; by strengthening India diplomatically, economically and militarily allowing it to pose an existential threat to the sovereignty and strategic interests of Pakistan and by containing China's rising global influence which has over the years become a key ally of Pakistan in the realms of economy and military.