

CURRENT AFFAIRS

Q1,

I. INTRODUCTION:

The evolving strategic dynamics in South Asia have been marked by the growing partnership between the United States and India. One prevailing narrative about this partnership suggests that it primarily aims to contain China's influence in the region. This narrative raises questions about its potential implications for Pakistan. The US-India partnership is characterized by shared values, economic cooperation, counter-terrorism efforts, and global governance. However, this evolving alliance raises significant concerns for Pakistan, including heightened security tensions, complications regarding the Kashmir dispute and nuclear dynamics, economic challenges, and the potential for diplomatic isolation. To navigate these complex regional dynamics, Islamabad is advised to prioritize conflict resolution through diplomatic engagement, actively participate in regional organizations for cooperation, diversify alliances, and pursue a balanced foreign policy.

2. U.S. - INDIA STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

a) Geostategic Interests

The United States and India share common interests in promoting regional stability, counter-terrorism efforts, and economic growth. Their partnership is based on shared values such as democracy and a rules-based international order. This cooperation also extends to defense and military with four foundational defense agreements, Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geospatial Intelligence (BECA), General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA), and Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA).

b) Economic Cooperation

The partnership between the U.S. and India extends beyond security concerns. Both countries have strong economic ties, with trade and investment playing a significant role. Economic cooperation, including technology transfer and investment, is an essential component of their relationship.

c, Global Governance

Both countries seek to reform and expand international institutions like the United Nations and the World Trade Organization. They work together on issues such as climate change, global health, and non-proliferation.

d, People-to-People Ties

Cultural, educational, and scientific exchanges between the U.S. and India are robust and contribute to the depth of their partnership.

2. IMPACT OF THIS PARTNERSHIP ON PAKISTAN

a, Security Concerns

Pakistan has historically viewed India as its primary security concern. The deepening U.S.-India ties can raise concerns in Pakistan about encirclement, especially when considering India's military capabilities and the potential for enhanced defense cooperation with the U.S.

b, Diplomatic Challenges

Pakistan's relationship with the U.S. has been complex, with periods of cooperation and tension. The strengthening of the U.S.-India ties can further strain U.S.-Pakistan relations and limit Islamabad's leverage in Washington.

c, Kashmir Dispute

The Kashmir dispute remains a long-standing, major source of tension between India and Pakistan. Any perceived strengthening of India's position, especially if supported by the U.S., can further complicate efforts to resolve this long-standing issue.

d, Diplomatic Isolation

Pakistan may face diplomatic isolation if it is perceived as undermining efforts to counter-terrorism & regional stability, which can further result from policies that are at odds with those of the U.S. and its allies.

e, Economic Challenges

Pakistan's economic development is crucial for its stability and security. The U.S.-India partnership can affect Pakistan's access to international markets, foreign investment, and economic opportunities, potentially limiting its growth prospects.

4. WAYS FORWARD FOR ISLAMABAD

a, Diplomacy

Pakistan should continue its diplomatic efforts to engage with the U.S. and address concerns related to growing U.S.-India partnership. Emphasizing Pakistan's role in promoting regional stability and counter-terrorism efforts can be a constructive approach.

b, Regional Cooperation

Islamabad can focus on fostering ties with regional players including China, Russia, and the Central Asian states.

Enhanced regional cooperation can help Pakistan diversify its strategic options. It

can also play a more significant role in regional organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). These forums can provide opportunities for diplomatic engagement, confidence-building measures, and economic cooperation.

c, Balanced Foreign Policy

Pakistan should pursue a balanced foreign policy that safeguards its national interests while avoiding unnecessary confrontation. Maintaining good relations with all major powers and contributing positively to regional stability can help Pakistan navigate complex geopolitical dynamics.

d, Diversifying Alliances

Pakistan can explore and strengthen partnerships with other countries and regions, such as the Middle East, Europe, and Africa. This can reduce dependence on any single ally and enhance Islamabad's strategic flexibility.

c, Economic Reforms

Pakistan should prioritize economic reforms to attract foreign investment and improve its economic stability. This can make Pakistan a more attractive partner for international cooperation and development initiatives.

3. CONCLUSION

It's crucial for Islamabad to acknowledge the changing dynamics in the region and adopt a pragmatic and multi-faceted approach to protect its interests. While concerns about the US-India partnership are valid, a confrontational stance may not be the most productive path. Diplomacy, regional engagement, and economic development can all contribute to a more secure and stable future for Pakistan.

07,

REPORTS INDICATING A POTENTIAL
DECLINE IN THE U.S. HEAVENLY

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of an increasingly multi-
polar world, the debate over the United
States' global position evolves around whether
it has experienced a potential decline in
hegemony or maintained its role as a global
leader. While the U.S. has been facing economic
competition from rising powers like China,
military overhauls, diplomatic challenges, and
a hit to the soft power, on the other
hand, the U.S. continues to maintain its
position through military superiority, economic
resilience, innovation and technology prowess,
and robust global alliances. While the
verdict remains complex and dynamic, the
United States continues to play a pivotal
role in shaping the global landscape,
with both challenges and strengths defining
its position in the evolving global order.

2. REASONS INDICATING A POTENTIAL DECLINE IN THE U.S. HEGEMONY

a, Economic Competition

The U.S. faces increased economic competition from rising powers like China. While the U.S. remains a global economic powerhouse, China's rapid economic growth and influence in international trade and finance challenge U.S. economic dominance. As per the Office of Technology Evaluation, 2022, U.S. exports totaled \$153.8 billion, an increase of 1.6% (\$2.4 billion) from 2021. U.S. imports from China totaled \$536.8 billion, an increase of 6.3% (\$31.8 billion); and the trade deficit with China was \$382.9 billion, an increase of 8.3% of (\$29.4 billion).

b, Military Overstretch

Maintaining a global military presence and involvement in conflicts around the world has strained U.S. resources. The costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have had long-term financial and strategic implications. The 20-year long War on Terror in Afghanistan cost U.S. a hefty \$8 trillion.

c, Diplomatic Challenges

The U.S. has faced challenges in building international consensus on critical issues like climate change, Iran, and North Korea.

Multilateral institutions have sometimes neglected U.S. interests. In 2017, then-U.S.

President Donald Trump announced the U.S. withdrawal from the Paris Agreement.

This decision was met with widespread international criticism and posed a significant diplomatic challenge.

d, Erosion of Soft Power

There is a perception that U.S. soft power, including cultural appeal and moral authority, has diminished due to divisive domestic politics and foreign policy decisions, which has affected its ability to lead through attraction. The Iraq War had a lasting impact on how the U.S. was perceived globally. It became increasingly challenging for the U.S. to rally international support for subsequent initiatives, such as the war in Afghanistan or efforts to combat terrorism.

3. REASONS SUPPORTING THE CONTINUATION OF U.S. GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

a, Military Superiority

The U.S. maintains military supremacy and has the ability to project force globally. It has military bases and alliances in strategic regions, which enhances its security posture.

b, Economic Resilience

Despite competition, the U.S. economy remains the largest and most diverse in the world. It has demonstrated resilience in recovering from economic crises. According to IMF Report (2023), U.S. remains a global economic powerhouse with its GDP standing at \$26.8 trillion. U.S. GDP is projected to rise to \$29.3 trillion by 2026. (Focus Economics, 2023)

c, Innovation and Technology

The U.S. continues to lead in innovation, technology, and scientific research. It is home to many of the world's top

universities and tech giants, contributing to its global influence. The U.S. ranks number one in a number of indicators, including university-industry, R&D collaboration, and intangible asset intensity. (Most Innovative Countries in the World, 2022).

d, Strategic Partnerships

In the midst of the economic challenges faced by the U.S. from rising powers, the U.S. continues to build strategic partnerships with countries. The U.S.-India partnership is perceived as containment efforts of China in the region and to curb China's increasing influence in international trade. Countries are still attracted to building alliances and partnerships with the U.S., showcasing the influence of U.S. on the world. Strategic partnership and civil nuclear deal with India will help the US in maintaining its unipolar status.

4. FUTURE OF US. IN A MULTIPOLAR WORLD

a, Economic Competitiveness

The U.S. will need to maintain and enhance its economic competitiveness to remain a major player in the multipolar world. This includes investing in innovation, research and development, education, and infrastructure to drive economic growth.

b, Multilateral Engagement

Active participation in international organizations and agreements will be crucial. The U.S. can leverage multilateral platforms to shape global rules and norms, especially in areas like climate change, trade, and security.

c, Diplomacy and Soft Power

Diplomatic efforts and soft power, including cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, and humanitarian initiatives, can build positive international perceptions and relationships.

d, Adaptive Foreign Policy

Flexibility and adaptability in foreign policy will be essential to respond to changing global dynamics, crisis, and opportunities

e, Alliances and Partnerships

Strengthening alliances and building strategic partnerships will be essential. The U.S. can work with like-minded countries to address common challenges, promote shared values, and advance mutual interests.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, while there are arguments suggesting a potential decline in U.S. hegemony due to economic competition, military overstretch, and diplomatic challenges, there are equally strong arguments supporting the view that the U.S. has maintained its global leadership through military superiority, economic resilience, alliances and more. The evolving dynamics

of a multi polar world make it challenging to draw a definitive conclusion, but the United States remain a central player in shaping the global landscape.

Q3,

1. INTRODUCTION

The power sector in Pakistan faces a myriad of issues, including chronic energy shortages, high production costs, outdated infrastructure, and political interference. These challenges have resulted in expensive electricity, stalling the economy, hindering industrial growth, causing unemployment, and triggering brain drain. Addressing these issues is critical for Pakistan's economic and social development, and potential solutions include infrastructure investment, diversifying energy sources, tackling circular debt, promoting energy efficiency, and encouraging private sector participation while ensuring transparency and accountability in the sector's operations.

2. ISSUES IN THE POWER SECTOR

a, Energy Shortages

Pakistan has struggled with chronic energy shortages, leading to load shedding and a lack of reliable electricity supply.

b, High cost of electricity

The cost of electricity production in Pakistan is relatively high due to outdated infrastructure, inefficiencies in the distribution system, and reliance on expensive fuel sources like oil and gas.

c, Circular Debt

The power sector is plagued by circular debt, where the government subsidizes electricity costs, leading to financial strain on the sector and delayed payments to power producers. This has a cascading effect on the entire energy supply chain.

d, Technical Losses

The transmission and distribution system

suffer from high technical losses, resulting in a significant waste of electricity and increased production costs

4, Political interference

Frequent political interference in the power sector, including decisions related to tariff adjustments and subsidies, disrupts the sector's stability and hinders long-term planning.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE ISSUES IN THE POWER SECTOR

1, Economic Impact

Expensive electricity hampers industrial growth, making it less competitive in global markets. It also discourages foreign investment and job creation, hindering economic development.

b, Social Consequences

Frequent power outages disrupt daily life, affecting everything from education to healthcare and reducing the overall quality of life for citizens.

c, Political Challenges

The power sector's issues have been a source of political instability and public dissatisfaction, resulting in protests and unrest in response to electricity shortages and high tariffs.

d, Pressure on Trade Balance

Pakistan's reliance on energy imports places additional pressure on the trade balance, as it must allocate significant foreign exchange for fuel imports, contributing to economic imbalances.

e, Loss of Foreign Investment

The challenging business environment resulting from energy shortages and high costs discourages foreign direct

investment (FDI) and negatively impacts Pakistan's image as an investment destination.

4. WORKABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

a, Investment in Infrastructure

Pakistan should invest in upgrading its power generation, transmission, and distribution infrastructure. Modernizing the grid and reducing technical losses can improve efficiency and reduce costs.

b, Address Circular Debt

Implement reforms to reduce the circular debt problem. This includes improving revenue collection, reducing line losses, and restructuring the power sector.

c, Energy Efficiency

Promote energy efficient technologies and practices in industries and households to reduce consumption and lower bills.

d) Private Sector Participation.

Encourage private sector investment through public private partnerships (PPPs) and competitive bidding for power projects to increase efficiency and reduce the burden on the government.

e) Transparency and Accountability

Ensure transparency in the power sector's operations and financial transactions to prevent corruption and mismanagement.

f) Diversify Energy Sources

Encourage the use of renewable energy sources like solar and wind power to reduce reliance on costly fossil fuels. Investments in renewables can lead to more affordable and sustainable energy.

g) Tariff Rationalization

Gradually reduce subsidies on electricity tariffs while implementing targeted social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations from the price hikes.

by Public Awareness

Educate the public about the challenges in the power sector and the importance of responsible energy use to garner support for reforms.

5. CONCLUSION

Addressing the power sector's problems in Pakistan is critical for sustainable economic growth, social well-being, and political stability. A comprehensive and coordinated approach including government, industry stakeholders, and civil society is essential to bring about the necessary reforms and improvements in the sector.