

# South Asia Analysis Group

Published on *South Asia Analysis Group* (<http://www.southasiaanalysis.org>)

[Home](#) > US-India Strategic Partnership 2019- Challenged by Unpredictabilities

---

## US-India Strategic Partnership 2019- Challenged by Unpredictabilities

Submitted by asiaadmin2 on Thu, 06/27/2019 - 12:37

**Paper No. 6554**

**Dated 27-June-2019**

By Dr Subhash Kapila

The US-India Strategic Partnership 20 years in making did not emerge as some divine revelation from the blues. It emerged from the shared China-centric strategic convergences that evolved between the United States and India across different political dispensations. Geopolitical imperatives in 2019, more forcefully point that both United States and India shed respective unpredictabilities that have emerged lately.

“Evolving geopolitical compulsions and imperatives would ultimately force the United States to dispense with its strategic ambiguities on China and Pakistan and push the United States to stand-by India in the intensifying China-India military confrontation. Such a game changer would ensure that the United States not only stands on the right side of history but also ensures the continued embedment in Indo Pacific Asia of the United States, with India’s strategic support.”. Observations highlighted on the back-cover of my Book in 2015 on ‘China-India Military Confrontation: 21st Century perspectives.

Credit has to be given that the United States under US President Trump has dispensed with the ambiguities outlined above which were of concern to India. Pakistan stands disciplined and the United States in the words of Secretary of State Pompeo has taken a 360 degree turn in its Pakistan policy in favour of India. On China too, the Trump Administration has cast China in adversarial contours across the spectrum. Both these changes in US policies are in consonance with Indian national security interests.

In return India too has under PM Modi with the US-India strategic convergences in play has positioned India alongside the United States geopolitical and security issues extending from Afghanistan to the South China Sea and Indo Pacific security and stability in general.

Then why have the United States and India run into a thorny patch lately when both the United States and India along with Japan were

seemingly on the same page in working together for the bigger picture of Indo Pacific security?

That the US-India Strategic Partnership's future as a vibrant relationship stands challenged in 2019 is evidenced by the two day visit of US Secretary of State Pompeo to New Delhi this week as a preparatory prelude to set the stage for the meeting of President Trump and Indian PM Narendra Modi at the G 20 Meet in Osaka ongoing.

Obviously, Washington realises that there have been rumblings in New Delhi on recent frictions emerging from US public assertions on Trade matters, India's purchases of S400 Air Defence missiles systems and India's special relations with Iran and purchase of Iranian oil. To what extent US Secretary of State Pompeo has been able to allay Indian fears of US unpredictabilities is not in public domain. The results will emerge only after the Trump-Modi Meet in Osaka.

Reflected in my preceding Papers repeatedly has been the fact that what is at stake is not the "Value" of the US-India Strategic Partnership but the unpredictabilities being inflicted on India's national security decision-making on issues of vital concern to India as stated above. Certain US flexibility may be in order.

Pertinent, it would be, to draw attention in this context to the letter sent to US Secretary of State Pompeo before his departure to New Delhi by Rep. Engel, Chairman House Committee on Foreign Affairs on June 24 2019.

Some of the significant observations made by Chairman Engel of the House Foreign Affairs Committee are reproduced verbatim, and should be factored-in by US President Trump as he meets Indian PM Modi:

- "There is a growing view that the Administration is attempting to coerce India in complying with US demands on a variety of issues, rather than negotiating with them as a strategic partner".
- Underscored "Lack of predictability and coherence in our strategic partnership with India".
- "Concerned about the inconsistencies between Administration's rhetoric and actions towards India".
- "The measure and strength of bilateral relationships cannot be boiled down to trade frictions and tariffs".
- "Frankly, the inconsistent US approach towards India risks setting back the Strategic Partnership that our countries have worked for decades to activate."

Also pointed out was the fact that Washington has not appointed for two years the Assistant Secretary of State for the regions and other such acts like capping H1B1 visa quotas restrictions on India.

Surely, India as the most powerful Asian Power in strategic partnership with the United States deserves better consideration and respect for its policy sensitivities besides Indian public opinion which counts in India.

Believing strongly that the United States and India need each other vitally in the Indo Pacific Region for their respective security interests, there is a higher call on the United States to create political space to accommodate India's other special relationships nurtured over decades also. The United States should allow India to lapse them in good time as the United States picks up the slacks there.

India too has to shed its unpredictabilities in its China policies. China is decidedly a military adversary of India and the United States under President Trump has cast China as an adversarial nation working against US national security interest. Then why should India dither in being apologetic about China figuring high in Indian threat perceptions as India's prime long range military threat?

Why should India continue as a full-fledged member of China-led or China dominated organisations like Shanghai Cooperation Organisation? It is India which is now hedging on China not the United States.

In my preceding Paper I have already pointed out that India's diplomatic and strategic community talks about 'Strategic Autonomy' and 'Non-Alignment 2.0' is meaningless. India has to resort to 'Balance of Power' strategies against China.

It is high time that India's China-policy and Pakistan-policy formulations are determined strictly by India's national security imperatives and formulations allowed to lapse into academic and philosophical /theoretical ruminatory past-times of diplomats and think-tanks arm-chair strategists.

In my considered assessment there are no geopolitical and strategic differences between the United States and India that challenge the shared bigger overall picture frame of the US-India Strategic Partnership and vision of Indo Pacific security. It is the bigger picture that the United States and India need to work for.

Concluding, it is hoped that both US President Trump and Indian PM Narendra Modi with their position as dynamic leaders of the world's two prominent democracies—one the most powerful, and the other most populous and vibrant—will rise to the occasion and steer the US-India Strategic Partnership to greater security heights and dispensing with unpredictabilities.

**Tags:**

US-India <sup>[1]</sup>

**Category:**

Papers <sup>[2]</sup>

**Countries:**

United States <sup>[3]</sup>

India <sup>[4]</sup>

**Topics:**

Strategic Affairs & Security <sup>[5]</sup>

Copyright ©2012. All Rights are Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/node/2478>

**Links**

[1] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/taxonomy/term/1781>

[2] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/papers>

[3] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/united-states>

[4] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/india>

[5] <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/strategic-affairs-and-security>