

President Obama's Legacy: An Academic's Perspective

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Abstract

In his second and last presidency, US President Barack Obama, conscious of his lasting legacy, has taken some bold and unprecedented foreign policy decisions. However, like President Richard Nixon, he also faces the daunting dilemma of rescuing the neo-liberal democratic ideals from the overwhelming influence of traditional geopolitical and security considerations, driving the US foreign policy for many decades. Since the end of World War II, the US pursuit of balance of power politics in Europe and East Asia helped stabilise these regions, but neglecting the same in South Asia and Middle East has made these regions unstable and prone to violent conflicts. Moreover, President Obama's neo-liberal goals of Nuclear Zero and the Nuclear Security Summit process, disproportionately focus on merely managing the technological and geo-strategic consequences, instead of addressing the geopolitical causes of conflicts, rooted in the territory, resources and identity of various value systems, exacerbated by globalisation. This paper evaluates the multiple policy dilemmas, which will characterise President Obama's lasting legacy, marked by the enduring conflict between neo-liberal ideals and neo-realist security imperatives.

Keywords: President Obama, US politics, Hard Power, Soft Power, Re-balance Strategy, Rise of China, Indo-US Strategic Partnership, Balance of Power Politics

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Nixon and Obama: Balancing Neo-Liberal Agenda with Neo-Realist Objectives

Barack Obama, the first black American President in US history, in the twilight of his presidency, knows that it is very difficult to be wise and popular at the same time. Like President Nixon, President Obama has also taken some of the most difficult and, in some cases, very unpopular decisions in the Post-World War II US history. Therefore, like President Nixon, the enduring conflict between neo-liberal US ideals such as disarmament and the realist geopolitical consideration like balancing the Chinese rise, will also characterise Obama's lasting legacy.

Despite hostile opposition from the Republicans, US think tanks and media alike, President Obama realised the limited and costly utility of employing massive American hard power for long and distant counter-insurgency campaigns towards the conduct of US foreign policy in general, and against the Taliban insurgency in particular, and withdrew the bulk of the US military forces from Afghanistan at the end of 2014.¹

Similarly, despite immense domestic political costs and somewhat dented global US pride, Richard Nixon also ended the US military operations against the nationalist Vietnamese insurgents, signed the Paris Peace Agreement in January 1973 and pulled the US forces out of Vietnam.² These military retreats, albeit politically costly at home, earned the US significant strategic and diplomatic gains, internationally. The departure of the US forces from Vietnam helped reduce the intense Cold War acrimony between Washington and Moscow, before Reagan took it to greater levels. The Nixon Administration also undertook several important strategic arms control arrangements like SALT I and Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaties, between the two rival superpowers.³

In addition, President Nixon also boldly engaged with China, once painted in popular US literature as an evil adversary.⁴ This helped Washington successfully isolate the communist Soviet Union during the Cold War and enhance the security of its various East Asian allies. Years later, this epic rapprochement, initiated through Pakistan, also secured covert Chinese co-operation in facilitating the Soviet retreat from

Afghanistan, ended the Cold War and eventually heralded an unprecedented era of economic interdependence between the two largest economies in the world.

Similarly, in his second term, Obama has overtly engaged with Iran, once demonised as part of the 'axis of evil' by his Republican predecessor.⁵ This new US policy towards Iran has enabled Washington to restore its leverage within the Iranian polity, regionally isolate President Bashar-al-Assad and weaken Syria. In addition, it helped the US revive balance-of-power politics in the Middle East, reduce world oil prices, and despite much hue and cry by Prime Minister Netanyahu on the Capital Hill,⁶ actually augmented the security of Israel, a key US regional ally.

Notwithstanding the criticism by the Republicans and the US press, President Nixon negotiated with the Vietnamese National Liberation Front⁷ and Palestine Liberation Organisation,⁸ once considered as terrorist organisations by the US. Four decades later, President Obama also negotiated with the Afghan Taliban and encouraged both the governments of President Karzai and President Ashraf Ghani to hold talks with the Afghan insurgents.⁹ This has helped Pakistan to strategically isolate the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) at a time, when its armed forces are actively engaged in a decisive war against the terrorists.¹⁰

More importantly, during their respective presidencies, thanks to the thaw with the USSR and Iran, both Richard Nixon and Barack Obama effectively used the improved bilateral relations with hostile states, to vigorously pursue and negotiate various nuclear arms control and disarmament arrangements, which, as a result, enhanced the US' regional and global security.

However, geopolitics has continuously overshadowed the neo-liberal agendas of both the US presidents. Nuclear disarmament is lauded worldwide as a noble and desirable goal, but the Obama Administration's current strategy to achieve it has not been effective. This is because the neo-liberal objective of disarmament could cost the US its overarching neo-realist interest and national security imperative to effectively, and

simultaneously maintain balance of power in different important regions of the world.

The Popularity – Statesmanship Dilemma

Increasingly, modern democracies are expected to be sensitive and responsive to domestic popularity ratings. This makes governments more accountable and keeps them aligned with the public interest and conscious of the public sentiment. However, at times, it becomes very hard for democratic governments to take difficult but sound decisions, which may well cost the government in terms of short-term public support essential for its own survival.

President Obama's bold decisions to diplomatically engage with Iran and resist the temptation to heavily involve the US military in distant, long and costly military campaigns¹¹ as a preferred policy approach, while dealing with conflict-prone regions and states with different political and value systems, could rank as some of his most difficult decisions. Such decisions have made Obama lose his popularity, at home, on the Capital Hill, with the US military industry, as well as with some of his traditional overseas allies, like Israel and Saudi Arabia. But then, in the twilight of his political career, Obama's main consideration, in the words of former US National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski, should be his lasting legacy, not temporary popularity.¹²

Some of these decisions have earned President Obama the Israeli wrath and Saudi alienation, while at home he has been the target of Republican vilification and the ire of the sprawling US Military Industrial Complex. Nevertheless, in the penultimate year of his last presidential term, President Obama needs to decide whether he ought to be more sensitive to temporary popularity or the judgement of history.

Domestic Politics: Hard Power versus Soft Power

After the end of the Cold War, the huge US military industry once enjoyed virtual monopoly over the international arms trade. More recently, however, thanks to modernising industries within various countries and

global and regional geopolitical transformations, the US defence industry is facing increasingly stiff competition from various European and Asian suppliers. This makes an enduring peace in the developing world unprofitable for a large defence industry, facing shrinking markets because frequent and extended crises and conflicts translate into larger, longer and more lucrative domestic and overseas defence contracts.

Resisting the pressure from the world's largest military industry which the US boasts, will not be easy for President Obama, at a time of increasingly competitive global arms trade. Large US defence manufacturers enjoy enormous influence over the defence policies, procurement and different programmes of the United States.¹³ The 44th and the first non-white US President can make the US and its policies more acceptable within the developing, and particularly the Muslim world, beyond Western Europe and East Asia, if he successfully helps Washington recover from the habit of employing excessive hard power, as the most preferred or used US foreign policy instrument, since the end of the World War II.¹⁴ One of the most daunting but vital tasks at hand for President Obama, is to rectify and recalibrate a prudent and delicate balance in the worldwide expression of the US soft and hard powers, that is both nationally and internationally acceptable. Without this, Washington cannot resolve the enduring post-Cold War tension between the domestic and global aspirations and perceptions.

Ironically, there is hardly any influential industry or large businesses inside the US or a powerful lobby within the Beltway, which could counter-balance the strong domestic support base for the US military interventionism and preference for hard power solutions in the pursuit of US security interests. This absence of an effective soft power lobby and the lack of economic incentives to domestically build support for peaceful and non-kinetic security solutions make the security discourse within the US political and strategic elite, unevenly poised in favour of hard power proponents and legislators.

Building and using hard power may well be very profitable for the large US defence industry or within the constituencies housing them, but in all scenarios, this may not be the most feasible and cost effective policy

option to sustain the US global leadership, in an era of accelerated globalisation. Translating its enormous hard power into effective influence has been a perpetual dilemma for the US foreign policy, which continues to bask in the glory of winning world's two most destructive conventional wars, by using its superior industrial capacity.

However, modern warfare is rarely conventional, making it very difficult for the US to find industrial solutions to asymmetric threats posed by insurgents or terrorists, drawing their strength from identity, culture and history, rather than material resources. Employing soft power may seem less exciting, glorious or profitable for an industrialised society, but could actually make both the US and its policies more acceptable for most of the world, particularly in regions with different value systems and states with different political systems.

The Revival of US Balance of Power Politics

The US decision to overtly engage with Iran has helped Washington isolate Bashar-al-Assad's government and weaken Syria, disarmed of its chemical weapons.¹⁵ As a result, the regional balance of power has tilted in favour of Israel. However, this altered distribution of power within the Middle East indicates that the US desires to alter the geo-political *status quo* in the energy rich region, rife with conflicts rooted in identity, history and culture. The absence of stable and well-governed state institutions in both Syria and Iraq, has accelerated the rise of ISIS, destabilised the entire region and threatened both Saudi Arabia and Iran. It has also enhanced the Iranian influence within the Arab world, worrying Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states, and re-ignited conflict in Yemen.

Notwithstanding the afore-mentioned destabilising regional effects, at the state level, these difficult but unpopular US decisions have diversified its policy options and deepened its leverage inside various regimes used to the geopolitical status quo approach within the turbulent Middle East. It has expanded the repertoire of US policy options, beyond its traditional dependence on long-standing regional allies, direct US military intervention and coercive diplomacy.

Reminiscent of the Nixon era, the Obama Administration's current negotiations with Iran over its nuclear programme have helped the US revive the balance of power politics within the Middle East. In return for allowing Iran badly-needed but carefully controlled economic breathing space, the Obama Administration has secured limited but valuable US leverage over Tehran, and also reduced the political space for radical anti-US elements with the Iranian polity. In addition, this cautious but limited thaw has earned the US Iranian help in Iraq and added more oil to the world supply, leading to lower global oil prices. Cheaper world oil prices translate into economic slow-down of both Russia and Saudi Arabia, reinforcing US global geo-economic and regional geo-strategic interests, both within Western Europe and the Middle East. This has helped the US reduce its huge oil import bill and contain the growing cost of industrial production, essential to maintain competitive prices for the US products in the overseas markets. As a net result, the US revival of balance of power politics has helped Washington reduce its own oil import bill, promote its global geo-economic interests and diversify its geo-political options within the Middle East.

The Geopolitics - Nuclear Disarmament Dilemma

The Obama Administration's two most ambitious neo-liberal goals were 'Nuclear Zero,'¹⁶ to rid the world of nuclear arms; and the pursuit of the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) process,¹⁷ to eliminate the global threat of nuclear terrorism. However, in an interconnected and globalised world, preventing the spread of nuclear technology between states is probably easier than reducing the accelerating conflict between different value systems. While the US foreign policy disproportionately focuses on the former, it badly neglects the causes, which lead to the latter.

While the US involvement and role in international security has grown substantially since the end of the Cold War, its popularity ratings have plummeted significantly within the developing world in general and Muslim world in particular.¹⁸ This makes sustaining robust alliances and durable partnerships with states with dissimilar value systems, challenging.

Recently, Obama recognised that violence and faith should be distinguished.¹⁹ However, in order to successfully deal with both the spread of technology and intolerance, this realisation needs to manifest itself in the form of a new strategy rooted in this vital distinction. Nuclear security cannot be promoted merely through technological means, but the geopolitical causes behind the worldwide spread of nuclear weapons as well as the spread of intolerance between different value systems also need to be addressed. This requires a firm US determination towards resolving the long-standing disputes, addressing the conventional asymmetries and promoting mutual respect and tolerance between different value systems, particularly in the more conflict-prone regions of the world. Such a comprehensive policy approach would also earn the US and its leadership greater acceptability and accommodation within the developing world in general and the Muslim world in particular.

The enormous hurdles in the fulfilment of these ambitious neo-liberal US goals such as disarmament are not merely technological, diplomatic or strategic. The inter-dependent milieu of contemporary global geo-economic and geo-political trends makes Obama Administration's task very difficult if not impossible. Some of the major global trends include the shifting global balance of economic power from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the rise of China, Russian resurgence, increasing volatility in the Middle East, and the United States' recognition of the limitations of its colossal hard power. The contemporary world is more globalised, dynamic and sensitive to the behaviour of superpowers, which constrains their traditional options and policy approaches towards various regions. The 21st century of accelerated globalisation necessitates the US to consider war as an extension of its foreign policy, rather than its foreign policy as an extension of warfare. Geo-strategic considerations need to follow the greater geopolitical imperatives such as maintaining balance of power in various regions, not vice versa. Obama's neo-liberal ideals such as Nuclear Zero and Nuclear Security Summit process would require resolving the inherent conflict between geopolitics and disarmament.

The Regional Balance of Power – Global Non-Proliferation Dilemma

The worldwide promotion of nuclear non-proliferation, both at the state and societal levels, represents one of the most important US foreign and security policy objectives, both during and after the Cold War. Nevertheless, when compared with the neo-realist imperative of maintaining peace by ensuring balance of power in various vital regions such as Western Europe and East Asia, to the neo-liberal goal of promoting non-proliferation, the former often took precedence over the latter.

If maintaining regional balance of power between Russia and Western Europe, China and East Asia, as well Israel and Egypt is a long-term US foreign policy imperative, then the same rationale ought to be relevant and applicable for the nuclear-armed South Asia.

According to the Wall Street Journal, the Indian defence imports have more than doubled during the past five years, which has made New Delhi the world's largest importer of weapons and military equipment.²⁰ In addition, India has emerged as a key US strategic partner in its rebalance strategy²¹ while also offering itself as a large market for the US defence exports.

The rapid military and technological Indian build up, coupled with its sustained economic growth has emboldened the Hindu nationalist majority government of BJP to more vigorously pursue regional hegemony in South Asia. After nuclearisation, disturbing the balance of power in South Asia will not only destabilise this conflict-prone region, but could also threaten regional peace and eventually undermine the core objectives of the long-term US re-balance strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region.

Since the end of the Cold War, the US foreign policy towards Europe, Middle East and East Asia offers various lessons for shaping a long-term policy approach toward a more stable South Asia. During the Cold War, the US foreign policy's dominant goal was to maintain balance of power in Europe, East Asia and Middle East, to help safeguard the US economy,

commercial and security interests, which were linked to these critical regions.

This was achieved by setting up North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1949,²² industrial reconstruction of Germany and military build-up of the Western Europe and also offering them a US nuclear umbrella. Washington did the same by establishing South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) in 1954,²³ industrial reconstruction of Japan and building up the militaries of Japan²⁴, South Korea, Taiwan, the Philippines, Thailand, Australia and Pakistan.

In case of Middle East, the US formed the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in 1955 with the promise of providing military and economic aid to Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Pakistan.²⁵ However, CENTO also collapsed in 1979 because the US interest of containing communism took precedence over addressing the regional security concerns of its smaller CENTO allies, regime changes in some allied states and partial Soviet success in turning some of the US allies towards Moscow. Except Turkey, already a NATO member, no CENTO members were offered US extended deterrence. This led Pakistan, Iran and Iraq to pursue their own nuclear programmes, affecting the US non-proliferation goals.

The lessons from the rise and fall of these three major Cold War US alliances are relevant today. First and the most significant lesson is that the level of US security and economic commitment was disproportionate, both within and between these alliances. The degree of the US economic and security commitment towards Germany and Japan was far greater than towards any other US regional ally. Second, maintaining a balance of power in Europe and East Asia took precedence over maintaining a balance of power in the Middle East. While huge quantities of arms and ammunition were sold to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Jordan, these allies merely represented lucrative arms markets for the large US military industry and, unlike Israel, were not assisted in building up local defence industries or even to gainfully employ the expensive and modern weaponry, purchased for their national defence. The results of this US approach, neglecting the necessity of maintaining a balance of power within the Middle East, became amply evident in the outcome of the 1967

and 1973 Arab-Israel wars, when Israel successfully vanquished both the pride and military capabilities of the Arab world.

The third important lesson is that in all these three major US treaty alliances, the conflict prone South Asia, constituting 15 per cent of world's land mass and 23 per cent of world's total population, was neglected and deprived of a sustainable balance of power, leading to frequent conflicts and crises. More importantly, India's great power ambitions and the absence of balance of power in South Asia led to its nuclearisation.

South Asia: Striving for a Sustainable Balance of Power

After the British departure from South Asia in 1947, the geostrategic location and large moderate Muslim population of Pakistan, governed by a favourably disposed government, made the US embrace it in both CENTO and SEATO alliances. However, unlike Western Europe or East Asia, the level of US economic and security commitment always fell far short of helping achieve a reasonable balance of power in South Asia. At the beginning of the Cold War, distrustful of the US, India, world's largest democracy, arrogantly rejected Washington's invitation to join the Western alliance against the Communist block.²⁶ Subsequently, New Delhi nimbly tiptoed between Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and close security cooperation with Moscow, yet received substantial support from the US. Consequently, this enabled India to maintain simultaneous access to both the latest and large scale Soviet and western arms. Similarly, even today, despite close strategic ties with the US, India continues to sustain intimate security relations with Russia while simultaneously building a large-scale inter-dependence with China.²⁷

The Cold War witnessed an interesting and unprecedented marriage of convenience between the world's largest democracy, India, and the world's leading communist superpower, Soviet Union, despite an earlier invitation from the dominant democratic-capitalist superpower, the United States, to join it. However, after the breakup of the communist superpower, the world's largest democracy ditched it to join the remaining

democratic-capitalist superpower in a strategic embrace,²⁸ arguably against another rising, neighbouring communist superpower, China.

The close security relationship, first with a communist superpower and later with the democratic-capitalist superpower enabled the world's largest democracy to first present itself as a global harbinger of non-alignment against the Western imperialism and subsequently as a huge consumer market for the Western capitalist goods. Both these strategic partnerships led to a vastly disproportionate growth in the Indian military might and large military industry which emboldened it and made smaller neighbours like Pakistan view New Delhi as a perpetual and dominant security threat to their national security.

This lingering and ever growing asymmetry of power in South Asia not only prevented conflict resolution, but also resulted in repeated Indian military interventions within its various neighbouring states and frequent wars and crises between India and Pakistan. The contemporary Indo-US strategic partnership is only exacerbating this asymmetry of power in the nuclear-armed South Asia to unprecedented levels, which could further destabilise the conflict-prone region of South Asia, and eventually undermine the US rebalance strategy.

World's Geo-Economic Flux and Globalisation

Today, like many previous US administrations, the Obama administration is yet again attempting to successfully manage these four complex and peculiar regions of Europe, East Asia, Middle East and South Asia, critical to world prosperity, peace and security. However, two factors distinguish the nature and dynamics of the systemic flux which these four regions currently face. These factors make the current US administration's task far more complex and exciting than any of its predecessors and necessitate a fresh approach to the way the US has traditionally dealt with them.

First, all these four regions are experiencing a systemic geo-economic flux, which is driving the geopolitical re-alignments in these four regions. Second, thanks to accelerated globalisation, facilitated by e-commerce,

internet, youth bulge, migrations, frequent trade, travel and shared economic and environmental concerns, these four regions are more interconnected and inter-dependent than ever before. This increases the hazard that the instability within one region could also make various other economically dependent regions unstable, far more than ever before.

Despite the continued US security commitments under NATO, the economies and industries of Western Europe are unable to keep pace with the growth in the East Asian economies and industries. As a result, in future, it will be in the long-term US interest to expand its export markets in Asia-Pacific and shift its policy focus beyond Atlantic-based politics. Therefore, in the long run, Europe is unlikely to continue to retain an identical degree of US security interest, which it once received from Washington. The shifting US security commitments, coupled with an increasingly assertive, prosperous and re-armed Russia, the top gas supplier to Europe, poses new challenges for the long term European political unity.²⁹ However, containing a democratic and capitalist Russia, unlike containing the communist Soviet Union during the Cold War, is no longer the dominant US foreign policy concern. It is the containment of the wealthiest communist creditor of the US, China, which is not only more important but also the more difficult imbroglio for the world's largest indebted economy, the United States.³⁰ In addition, East Asia is getting richer by the day and as a result, is receiving unprecedented US interest, investment and security commitments. This trend, reminiscent of the Korean War days, is making Europe nervous that the increasing US security commitment towards East Asia translates into a declining US commitment towards Western Europe.

However, the rate at which the Chinese economy is growing will make it increasingly difficult for the slower US economy to continue to underwrite the security of its numerous allies, which ensures a stable balance of power in future in the region. This sobering realisation has forced the Obama administration to encourage Japan, Australia and India, to take an increasingly assertive security role in Asia-Pacific, sometimes far beyond their own respective regions.

In the Middle East, compelled by the rapid rise of ISIS, the recent US thaw with Iran, despite an isolated and weakened Syria has infuriated Israel and deeply unsettled Saudi Arabia. Nonetheless, due to their deep economic, commercial, political and security dependence over Washington, both Tel Aviv and Riyadh are unlikely to review their bilateral relation with the sole superpower at a time when it has more, not less regional leverage and influence, not only towards them but also over their regional arch rival, Iran. In future, enhancing the US leverage over Iran, in return for minor economic respite and gaining enhanced monitoring of the Iranian nuclear programme will also enable Washington to resume playing a balance of power politics in the region between Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia. This is akin to the Cold War days of the Shah of Iran, when Saudi Arabia was neither the sole Middle Eastern oil supplier to the US, nor was Israel the only regional policeman within Middle East. This approach by Obama towards the Middle East, though vociferously despised by both the AIPAC and Republicans, has a similar ring to the way Nixon once conducted US foreign policy towards the turbulent rich region, sharply divided on the basis of different identities, histories and political systems.

Conclusion

Obama Administration must reflect on the costly but valuable lessons of Cold War and not destabilise South Asia and Indian Ocean, as part of the risky attempt to balance power in East Asia. In the last days of the Second World War, despite the US, UK, France and Russia, four of the major victors jealously competing against each other to occupy major parts of Germany, thanks to an effective balancing of power by the US within Europe for the past 7 decades, the continent has been successfully saved from a major war. However, minus a sustainable balance of power, both the Middle East and South Asia, despite providing the industrialised world with immense energy, raw material, human resource and major markets throughout the 20th century, have suffered and continue to pay a heavy price, which is also harmful to the long-term US security and energy interests.

Due to the absence of a sustainable balance of power, the US economy, taxpayers and nation continue to pay a very heavy price for the conflicts that continue to engulf the Middle East and South Asia, in the form of higher US defence spending, enduring overseas military operations, distant deployments and higher oil prices. The deadly terrorist attacks on the US, Britain and France in the post-Cold War era have highlighted the gravity of the universal need to develop regional balance of power, just resolution of lingering conflicts and an equitable distribution of wealth and opportunities, consistent with the demands of the present world order, regional security and a globalised, inter-connected world.

Therefore, it is understandable why, like Nixon, the Obama Administration is reviving the balance of power politics in the Middle East. It is also understandable why the US is balancing power in East Asia through Japan, Australia and South Korea. However, the US desire for the Indian extra-regional strategic role, under-estimates both the Chinese hard and soft power and over-estimates the Indian political will to provoke and antagonise neighbouring Beijing, against its own long-term national and regional interests. As a result, New Delhi could be the spoiler in this new inter-regional great game of balance of power politics by simultaneously destabilising East Asia, Indian Ocean and South Asia.

In sum total, the current US geo-political approach will create a geo-strategic equation, which will negatively affect US global and regional economic, energy and security interests and also disturb the balance of world's economic power. The current global balance of economic power, though shifting in Chinese favour, is not detrimental to the US interests and it also helps anchor a mutually beneficial economic interdependence between the world's two largest economies and industries. This further ensures a lasting, peaceful and profitable co-existence between the world's most powerful democracy and the most powerful communist republic. In addition, thanks to the sustained and growing economic, industrial and cultural engagements with the free world, Chinese economy and society, unlike the former Soviet Union, is neither closed nor hostile to the Western civilisation.

However, an aggressive and coercive approach towards isolating a pacifist China, the greatest US creditor in history,³¹ embracing an ambitious India and neglecting Pakistan, thereby making it more insecure, will be a far riskier approach and disturb the US grand chessboard in three regions, critical to the world security and prosperity, i.e.; East Asia, South Asia and Indian Ocean.

In addition, this will distract US from the growing global threat of terrorism and over-stretch the US military around the world at a time of economic strain. It would also embolden India, reduce US leverage over Pakistan and Afghanistan and accelerate strategic arms race in all three regions mentioned above.

More importantly, it will also eventually harm the neo-liberal ideals of President Obama, manifested in the Global Zero, Nuclear Security Summit Process and non-proliferation objectives. Strategically building up India will harm Nuclear Zero and with the Maoist insurgency, the single largest insurgency in entire South Asia, amidst a growing Indian nuclear infrastructure, could even pose new and grave dangers to the world's nuclear security. The solution to these complex but inter-related challenges, liken the Post-World War II Europe and East Asia, lies in four vital long-term US foreign policy steps.

First, the US should help ensure sustainable economic and military balance of power in South Asia and Middle East. Second, it should encourage India to cope with the causes not merely the consequences of domestic insurgency, instead of blaming and coercing Pakistan and antagonising and provoking China. Third, instead of temporarily and militarily managing terrorism, the root causes of political violence in the developing world should be decisively, dispassionately and simultaneously addressed through conflict resolution, socio-economic development and encouraging good governance. Fourth, the US should exude respect, patience and tolerance towards the distinct values and political systems of other societies, different from its own, rooted in peculiar geography, history and identity. After World War II, this is what the US did in case of the nations of Europe and East Asia, with which it allied itself but neglected in South Asia and the Middle East. This created

a deep distrust between the weak and externally dependent state structures and dynamic societies experiencing youth bulge, being currently exploited by terrorists around the world, on the misleading pretexts of religion and identity. It also harmed the US security, energy and economic interests, diverted its attention and resources and created challenges, alien and asymmetrical to the US liberal ideals, cosmopolitan culture, industrial society and its military capabilities and traditions.

These fundamental policy alterations will enable South Asia and the Middle East to achieve lasting regional peace, security and stability both within itself and also be able to positively contribute to the stability and security of other regions. In addition, it will also encourage China and Pakistan to continue to cooperate with the US in socially and economically stabilising South Asia and Central Asia and reducing the growing global threat of terrorism by addressing its causes, not merely its consequences.

More importantly, this will also make the US less hated and more acceptable and respectable within most of the developing and Muslim societies around the world, not merely in the developed Western world. Consequently, it will reduce the diverse and asymmetrical threats to the US national security, not merely of technological, but more importantly, of ideational nature.

Such will be a more lasting foreign policy legacy, which President Barack Obama, could leave as his indelible print on world history. This will also help build a more secure, prosperous, acceptable and durable world security architecture, for most of us, not exclusively for some of us, which otherwise, would be both temporary and more dangerous. Such a bold foreign policy approach will surely yield criticism from the sceptics and traditionalists within the US foreign policy planners and advisors. However, it will provide the US with a more sustainable foreign policy, which is more suitable to the modern globalised and inter-dependent world, and also earn President Obama a very respectable and rewarding legacy meriting the Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

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