

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

INDIA–US RELATIONS: A ROAD MAP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

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After more than half a century of unrealized potential, India is now emerging as an important state in the global balance of power. In the years ahead, India will have an opportunity to shape the outcomes on some of the most critical issues of the twenty-first century: the construction of Asian stability, globalization, economic prosperity, cultural vibrancy, neutralization of extremist ideologies, terrorism and fundamentalism, and upholding democracy. Given the magnitude of the global security challenges, the United States needs a strong and competent partner in the Indian sub-continent. With the signing of the India-US nuclear pact, a major milestone has been reached in the relations between the two countries. However, the past record of India-US relations has not been encouraging and although it has reached an all time high now, there is a need to sustain, strengthen, and further this relationship. This study will focus on the various areas which provide the opportunities for building confidence, progressing in mutually beneficial fields, and promoting peace and stability as natural allies in a turbulent world.

INDIA–US RELATIONS: A ROAD MAP FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The two largest democracies in the world, India and the United States, appear to have finally come of age. Despite sharing and cherishing many common values of liberty and freedom and a common perception of democracy, the two countries, in the past 60 years of India's independent existence, have had a less than cordial relationship. Besides a commonality of ideology, the two countries envisaged the construction of a similar post-war world order based on the principles of peace, security cooperation, and development which should have driven them to work together on world affairs. However, it is paradoxical that it has taken six decades to reach the current level of understanding and trust between these two giants. The contrast with past practices and patterns of Indo-American interaction could not have been starker. Moral indignation and mutual incomprehension, even at times a sense of betrayal, have been the defining characteristics of relations between India and the United States over the last half century.¹ They have been described as “unfriendly friends,”² and it is often said that despite the US being a great democracy, it failed to understand how to deal with another strong democracy. However, in spite of the accumulated and persistent discomfort between India and the US, relations have never broken down completely, and new grounds for hope have repeatedly been rediscovered.

In sharp contrast to the past, today India-US relations have reached an all time high with the signing of the historic nuclear pact in July 2005 between the two countries for sharing of civilian nuclear technology and its recent ratification by the US Congress. Also, the US signal of a new era in ties with South Asia was its decision to sell F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan while for the first time offering both F-16s and even more advanced F-18 jets to India.³ This is a significant shift from the past and a clear confirmation of growing mutual trust and confidence. Even while such outstanding progress is made, however, it is important to understand the different sources of conflict in the past relations between the US and India and how they have manifested over different periods through a historical prism. An analysis of our national interests, strategies, convergent interests, and possible uncertainties will direct our way ahead. Such an approach will help in identifying the important sensitivities in the relationship besides paving the way to strengthen and sustain the current level of engagement.

India-US Relations: Through the Prism of History

India-US relations began on a good note. During the days of the Second World War, India was a subject that figured in many discussions between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.⁴ Roosevelt was supportive of the demands of

Indian nationalism and pressed Churchill hard to grant India de facto independence. He recognized that it was illogical for the Allies to claim they were fighting a war for freedom from fascism even as the same freedom was denied to people in the colonies.⁵ At birth, the US Bill of Rights, along with the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, was used as the first draft of the chapter on Fundamental Rights in the Indian Constitution.⁶

Despite the good beginning, the first fifty years of India-US relations quickly drifted into a state of “estrangement.” India became independent in 1947 just as the Cold War started gathering steam. The United States’ support to Pakistan on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in the United Nations in 1948-49 and initiation of military support to Pakistan in 1964, cast an irrevocable shadow on the relationship.⁷

The United States and the USSR were engaged in building military alliances. As a newly independent developing country, India’s reaction was to stay away from the power blocks and forge a path of nonalignment. India’s policy of nonalignment was called “immoral” by the then US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.⁸ This division was further augmented by Pakistan’s joining the US as a formal ally in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). As a result, the United States tended to balance its support and commitment for India as a democracy with its national interests as perceived through the prism of Pakistan, an ally.

Throughout the Cold War, there was never a direct clash of interests between the United States and India. India and the United States have shared virtues of political pluralism at home and liberal internationalism abroad.⁹ The English language has provided another important bond. Yet the world’s two largest democracies found it difficult to build a serious political partnership. Their diplomats never missed a chance for a verbal duel.¹⁰ The sixties and seventies saw the United States progressively drifting away from India while the Soviet Union offered India political, military, and economic support. India-US relations hit rock bottom in 1971 during the war with Pakistan over the liberation of Bangladesh. A virtual entente emerged between the United States, China, and Pakistan against India.

The irony of India-US relations can be understood only in terms of the American approach towards India’s neighbors in the Cold War with the attendant consequences for Indian security, though it was not rooted in an inherent American hostility towards India. The deepening of America’s strategic nexus with India’s two major neighbors heightened India’s security problems, driving India closer to the Soviet Union. An occasional effort by the United States to break this vicious circle by engaging India and limiting the spill over from the Cold War never really succeeded.¹¹ Thus the Cold War saw a steady accumulation of distrust.

The end of the Cold War, collapse of the Soviet Union, and launching of an economic liberalization program in India in the early nineties brought a new tone and content to the relationship. In 1991 after the visit to India by Lieutenant General Claude M. Kicklighter, Commander, US Army Pacific Command, a major change was brought about in the bilateral relations. The Kicklighter proposals included service-to-service exchanges and expansion of a defense cooperation framework. However, the relationship still remained hostage to differences between the two sides over India's quest for a minimal nuclear deterrent. The conduct of nuclear tests and the announcement of a program of weaponisation by India in May 1998 led to yet another low point in the relationship. The United States joined hands with China to rally the world against India and to call for a rollback of its nuclear program. The United States further went on to impose military, economic, scientific, and technological sanctions against India. However, as brought out by Michael R. Kraig and James Henderson in the report of the 42nd Strategy for Peace Conference, the events of 1998 validated the dissenting opinion that "pursuing ambitious nonproliferation goals without a full appreciation of regional interests and dynamics has not worked, as both India and Pakistan have demonstrated an ability to resist outside pressures perceived as inimical to their vital interests."¹²

The commencement of a series of intense discussions between the two sides at the level of Indian Foreign Ministers over the next two years resulted in a slow normalization of the relationship. During the Kargil conflict of 1999 between India and Pakistan, Indians viewed President Clinton's role in persuading Pakistan to withdraw its troops from the Indian portion of Kashmir as an important milestone since the American President appeared to have acknowledged the justice of India's Kashmir stance.¹³

President Clinton's Visit – A Turning Point

The visit to India by President Bill Clinton in March 2000 can be described as the first major post cold war turning point in India-US relations. This visit, the first by a US President to India in almost 22 years,¹⁴ marked a major change in US policy. "Whether it was a consequence of a tacit acknowledgement by the US of India's 'unofficial' nuclear status, its economic reforms, its acceptance as a preeminent regional power and a source of stability in the Indian Ocean region, or a reflection of a changed mind set of decision makers on both sides in a post-cold war environment," an Indian analyst has observed, "the fact remains that these developments could not have been foreseen by any observer in 1998."¹⁵ Further, the US admitted its neglect of India and expressed willingness to end the situation wherein the entire relationship was held hostage to differences on the nuclear question. Finally, by President

Clinton's undertaking a five day visit to India and only a transit halt of a few hours in Pakistan, the United States made it clear that its priority within South Asia would be relations with India.

Bush Administration – Making A 'Fundamental Difference'

The Bush Administration took office with a determination to make a fundamental difference in its relations with India.¹⁶ It was in this context of rapidly improving India-US relations that the tragedy of 9/11 occurred. Pakistan, under US pressure, was forced to give up its policy of support for the Taliban and join the global coalition against terrorism. US action in Afghanistan resulted in the destruction of Al-Qaeda terrorist training camps. Two Pakistan based terrorist organizations, Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed, identified by India as responsible for the attack on the Indian Parliament, were placed on the list of terrorist organizations by the US Government. On 12 January 2002, following intense diplomacy by the US, President Musharraf delivered a landmark speech calling for change within Pakistan. He called for an end to militancy and said no organization within Pakistan would be allowed to engage in terrorism.

Though Pakistan is yet to deliver on these promises, a review of India-US relations in the context of the above events indicates that despite the US reengagement with Pakistan, the post-September 11 scenario provided a new strategic attraction to bring India and the United States closer than ever before. The US clearly demonstrated its ability to make Pakistan turn against the Taliban and also retains the ability to make Pakistan comply on its promises of putting an end to cross border terrorism against India.

The strength of India-US partnership can be judged by its ability to tide over differences. Despite India's inability to send troops to Iraq in 2003, the Bush administration was understanding and appreciative of India's domestic constraints, and there were no ostensible adverse impacts on India-US defense ties. Nevertheless the disjuncture demonstrated that India's domestic political constraints might produce outcomes that run counter to US expectations.¹⁷

Current Situation

Several recent developments provide both hope and opportunity for the two largest democracies to overcome the emotional baggage and the burden of history that had straddled India-US relations. Within the short period of the last few years, there has been unprecedented high-level political engagement between India and the United States. Mutual understanding and trust has grown considerably. The growing influence of the Indian-American community has also had a positive impact. This community now nearly 1.7 million strong is frequently cited as a reason for optimism about the future of India-US relations. Indian-Americans command a

respectful attention from US politicians that would have been unimaginable as recently as a decade ago.¹⁸

A transformed bilateral relationship that makes the United States as Secretary of State Condeleza Rice put it, “ a reliable partner for India as it makes its move as a global power “ will ultimately advance America’s own global interest in defeating terrorism, arresting nuclear proliferation, promoting democracy, and preserving a stable balance of power in Asia over the long term.¹⁹ Sanctions imposed against India by the US have been withdrawn resulting in the elimination of one of the biggest irritants in the relationship. An ambitious agenda for future cooperation has been unveiled. The administration has compressed the implementation schedule of the next steps in strategic partnership agreements previously reached with New Delhi and has expressed its willingness to discuss a range of difficult and highly contentious issues through three separate, high level dialogues on security, energy, and economy.²⁰ The partnership would also cover a new agricultural knowledge initiative with an investment of \$100 million, as well as joint efforts in education, conservation, science and technology, health, natural disaster response, bio terrorism, airport security, and cyber security.²¹ Both countries have also decided to work much more closely in countering threats from terrorism and proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Defense relations between the two countries, which had been frozen following India’s nuclear tests, have resumed in a big way. The two sides have declared the goal of creating a comprehensive, deep, and mutually beneficial defense relationship based on shared strategic interests in Asia and beyond. A Defense Policy Group established in December 2001 has initiated combined special operations training, small unit ground/air exercises, and training exercises with US marines. A security cooperation group to manage the defense supply relationship has been established. Bilateral ties also cover the fields of defense production and research, military planning, tri-service doctrine, and tri-service institutions.²² In the last three years, over 15 joint exercises have been conducted between US and Indian forces. A new defense framework has been signed on 28 June 2005 between the Indian Defense Minister and US Secretary of Defense. The Defense Policy Group will rely upon this framework for guidance on the principles and objectives of India-US strategic relationship and will strive to achieve those objectives.²³

Even before the events of September 11, the United States and India had set up a working group on counter terrorism, to coordinate and initiate joint efforts to address the challenge posed by terrorism. These efforts received impetus with both sides deciding to launch a cyber-terrorism initiative. The US has also offered to make available to India

specialized equipment and technology to strengthen border management and surveillance aimed at preventing infiltration of terrorists from Pakistan

The revival of the Pakistan factor in the initial phases of the campaign against terrorism resulted in significant disquiet in India. There was concern over whether this would mean the resumption of a major flow of arms to Pakistan. But to the contrary, US efforts have resulted in President Musharraf's promising to address what until this day has been India's most important security concern, namely, the use of terrorism as a tool of national policy by Pakistan. Furthermore, the US has repeatedly taken the position that Pakistan should do more to address militancy within the country and the concerns of India, besides viewing the Kashmir dispute as a bilateral issue between Pakistan and India.

National Interests

The challenges to Indian foreign policy were adroitly expressed by H.E. Mr. Kanwal Sibal, then Foreign Secretary of India:

Peace and security in our neighborhood and in our region as a whole are uppermost in our mind. The combat against international terrorism presents an immense challenge. Energy security, creating favorable conditions for our economic development, coping with the consequences of instability or military conflict in the Middle East, the reform of the Security Council, promoting multipolarity, finding an adequate response to doctrines diluting the principles of sovereignty and seeking to establish the right to intervene, promoting a more equitable equation between the developing and the developed world in political, economic and technological domains are some of the problems facing Indian foreign policy.²⁴

On analysis, barring the reference to reforming the Security Council, Mr. Sibal's statement has a lot in common to the preamble to the National Security Strategy released by the White House. There is no doubt that both the United States and India are expressing strikingly similar national security interests. In truth, the 'democracy linkage' is perhaps a necessary, but certainly not a sufficient, ingredient for the forging of a long term stable partnership between the United States and India. Shared democratic values did not keep the two from quarreling in the past, nor will they guarantee a convergence of interests in the future.²⁵ However, a wider range of national interests can stake out the path for future India- US cooperation as stated in the US National Security Strategy, 2000. "The United States has undertaken a transformation in its bilateral relationship with India based on a conviction that US interests require a strong relationship with India," that document emphasized. "We are the two largest democracies committed to political freedom protected by representative government. India is moving toward greater economic freedom as well. We have a common interest in the free flow of commerce

including through the vital sea lanes of the Indian Ocean. Finally we share an interest in fighting terrorism and creating a stable Asia.”²⁶ The geopolitical clout possessed by the US is in all measures vastly greater than that of India. The economic, military, and technological supremacy enjoyed by the US today has placed it in a position unequalled since the Roman Empire. Professing itself as the world leader and champion of democracy, the US national strategy recognizes the benefits of multilateralism and legitimization of policies which comes through garnering approval from world bodies such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization, etc. To maintain credibility the US must act responsibly and strive to operate through such organizations. However, the good of the world, humanitarian or international interests can never be allowed to supplant the national interest. Where national interest is at stake, the US can and will act unilaterally.²⁷ India, of course, will act in a similar manner.

The Road Ahead

In a host of ways, this is a healthier, more collaborative, and mutually beneficial relationship than Washington and Delhi have seen in many years, if ever. An important shift has taken place in American thinking about India and its place on the world map. For a growing number of Americans, including many senior officials, India is no longer merely a South Asian country, but one with a reach and a role extending much beyond the sub continent. Compared with the past, there exists today, both in the United States and India, a far larger number of individuals and interests with a clear cut stake in a flourishing bilateral relationship.²⁸

Examining the prospects for India-US relations in the context of the growing congruence of interests, the future of the relationship appears very bright. As the sole surviving superpower, United States has the onus of setting an example in leading the world into the next millennium which is far more challenging and complex than the Cold War. Rapid technological growth and integration offer countries varied options of using technology as either an instrument of prosperity or a weapon of war. In this context, the role of the larger security community in each country becomes increasingly important. Whatever the specifics of the framework that American and Indian policymakers agree to, its implementation would be contingent upon generating and sustaining national consensus on the relevant issue areas.

The realist view of international relations holds that all nations must act in the national interest first and foremost. Brief aberrations from this cardinal rule are occasionally undertaken for the short term so that longer term national goals can eventually be achieved. Before two nations can embark on a new, progressive, mutually beneficial relationship, a common set of goals must be realized.

Convergent Interests

Since 2000, when Prime Minister Vajpayee declared that the US and India were “natural allies,” a great deal of scholarly analysis has been undertaken by both sides to articulate areas where cooperation could lead to the achievement of mutual goals. India’s desire to secure long term energy sources makes joint exploration of oil and natural gas assets in Central Asia and the Caucasus a likely area of cooperation. A joint venture financed disproportionately by the US would benefit both nations in achieving greater energy independence.²⁹ India currently relies on the Persian Gulf for 90% of its oil supplies. It has pursued the creation of an “Asian Energy Grid” by persuading Bangladesh to participate in a natural gas pipeline from Burma to India and by investing over 5 billion dollars in exploration from Russia to Vietnam. The US should recognize that Pakistan sees the 25 year, \$20 billion liquid natural gas purchasing deal between India and Iran as win-win, given its potential revenue as its transit state. The US must, therefore, trust New Delhi’s ties with Tehran and could also leverage the greater knowledge and access Indians have in Iran.³⁰

India and US should be looking for ways to expand their defense and security co-operation to ensure a stable power in Asia. Washington should also encourage the fledgling strategic engagement between India and Japan.³¹ Joint peacekeeping, maritime interdiction, and security in the Indian Ocean and the extended littoral region, to secure peaceful commerce from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca, free up US naval assets to be employed elsewhere while elevating the prestige and influence of the Indian Navy without posing a threat to the littoral nations.³² While India is open to defense cooperation with the US and is willing to consider major defense purchases from Washington, success will depend on the American willingness to offer advanced defense technologies to Delhi and possible coproduction of key components.³³ For many in New Delhi accustomed to a hardware supply relationship with the Soviet Union and therefore skeptical of US reliability as a supplier over the long term, the litmus test of defense ties is material: technology transfer and hardware.³⁴

The success of India’s information technology (IT) center and the high percentage of Indians and Indian-Americans in California’s Silicon Valley and the other US high-technology centers lend further credence to the belief that India represents a new and largely untapped reservoir of opportunity.³⁵ This can be mutually beneficial if we undertake continued business ventures in IT and advanced technology to foster economic growth in both nations. Indian brain power and skill can ensure US competitiveness and inventiveness.³⁶

By leading together, America and India can meet other global challenges and one of the biggest is civilian nuclear energy. Last summer in Washington, America and India reached an

agreement to share civilian nuclear technology and to bring India's civilian nuclear programme under the voluntary safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.³⁷ Development of the Indian nuclear energy sources would help eliminate a major obstacle to continued economic growth and to the development of India's limited energy infrastructure.

The war against terrorism is well begun, but only begun. India and the United States are today among the foremost targets of terrorism in the world. While significant victory has been achieved with the overthrow of the Taliban and the destruction of Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan and Iraq, there still remain huge tasks ahead. There are indications that terrorists have sought to build crude nuclear bombs and obtain biological and chemical weapons.³⁸ In all these efforts, the United States and India have common interests. Countering religious fundamentalism and drug trafficking within South Asia, Central Asia, and the Caucasus would help to eliminate the breeding grounds and financial sources which propagate international terrorism of which both countries are victims.³⁹

India, as President Bush has remarked, can be a role model and of great assistance to fledgling democracies the world over. India is also showing its leadership in the cause of democracy by cofounding the global democracy initiative.⁴⁰

There is an arc of instability stretching from Central Asia through the Gulf, to South East Asia and North East Asia. A number of common concerns and interests bind India and the United States in all these regions. For example, in Afghanistan, both countries would like to see stability and a democratic system of government, representative of all communities. Both can contribute a great deal to the reconstruction of Afghanistan. In a variety of fields of social endeavor such as education, health infrastructure, vocational training, and small industries, India has expertise that would be relevant and appropriate to Afghanistan. In Central Asia, many of the countries are politically unstable, economically underdeveloped, and threatened by forces of Islamic extremism and militancy. India and the United States share a mutual interest in seeing peace and stability in the region. Both also have a common interest in ensuring that the energy resources of the region are developed and brought to the international market. India also has over three million expatriates living and working in the Gulf countries. Yet both India and the United States would like to see an end to the support for militancy that has emanated from the region. India and the United States would both like to ensure that there is free flow of energy from the Gulf and that the sea-lanes of the Indian Ocean are secure and free of piracy. Both have an interest in the stability of the Philippines and Indonesia, which are in India's immediate neighborhood and have witnessed high levels of terrorism in recent times. Finally,

India and the United States share a common interest in seeking an end to nuclear and missile proliferation to Pakistan by China and North Korea and by Pakistan to other States.

India-US strategic cooperation has also been viewed by some analysts in the context of a “rising China.” For India, keeping in view its socio-economic strategic priority, an environment of peace is a precondition to pursue human development at an ever increasing pace. India’s interests, therefore, require a cooperative relationship with China.⁴¹ In the words of India’s Foreign Minister, “There is enough space for developing together, growing together, not at the expense of the other but independent of each other.”⁴² Surely such an approach will contribute to strategic stability in Asia.

Transition of Pakistan into a moderate Islamic society remains a high priority. India and the United States share a vital interest in ensuring that President Musharraf backs his words with action, which is still awaited, and that his speech of 12 January 2002 is translated into reality. There is a seamless range between the forces of terror that target India and those that target the United States. Many of these forces continue to operate out of Pakistan. It is now well known that there are some elements in Pakistan’s Army and intelligence services that are supportive of the forces of militancy.⁴³ Terrorism is the same whether it was the killing of innocents in Kashmir, London, or New York.⁴⁴ An end to terrorism and militancy in Pakistan is as much in the interest of the United States as that of India. Both need to sustain their pressure on President Musharraf to take action against all terrorist groups and dismantle their infrastructure and financial networks. Though India has achieved its cherished goal of de-hyphenation of its relations vis-à-vis Pakistan, US policy towards Pakistan still plays a decisive role in both countries’ interests. Like the US, India remains deeply concerned about the possibility of Pakistani nuclear material or related material falling into the hands of terrorists. Despite the fact that the F-16s provide Pakistan a nuclear delivery means, Indian criticism of the F-16 deal was largely muted in part because of the larger stakes in the US relationship, and the high importance that India gives to its relations with the US.⁴⁵ According to the American expert on South Asia from the Brookings Institution, Stephen P. Cohen, Pakistan has already become “perhaps the leading center for proliferation in history having shared its nuclear technology with a variety of states, all of whom are hostile to America. Yet despite not allowing American or international atomic energy inspectors to interrogate AQ Khan, Pakistan’s nuclear mastermind, Gen Musharraf, has been less than shy from manipulating America’s largesse in the war on terror to gain ground technologically on India.”⁴⁶ Apart from the many other variables involved, enhanced post 9/11 American influence over Pakistan offers new hope in a future politically viable resolution of the Kashmir dispute, negotiated bilaterally between India and

Pakistan.⁴⁷ President Bush has said, "I believe that a prosperous democratic Pakistan will be a steadfast partner for America, a peaceful neighbor for India, and a force for freedom and moderation for the Arab world."⁴⁸ Developing a common approach to Pakistan remains the most important obstacle in the prospects for India-US strategic partnership.⁴⁹

When the India-US rapprochement began in the late nineties, economics was the main driving force. The role it can play in bringing the two countries closer together cannot be underestimated. While the progress of economic reforms within India has been slow, there is consensus across the political spectrum that a further opening up of the economy and integration with world markets are the ways ahead for India. As reforms gather steam, the private sector in the United States and India, with the Indian American community playing an important 'bridging' role, will automatically seek out opportunities that bring the two countries closer together. India's knowledge-based industries allow the multinational cooperations to work round the clock taking advantage of all the cutting edge tools globalization has to offer. However, the Indian economy more generally is far less linked internationally. India's policy of gradual reform is increasing its ties to the world and improving domestic performance. In time, such linkages may have a more significant impact on India's economy and on the world. But the country continues to face many challenges including alleviating poverty, improving infrastructure, and reducing government controls and fiscal deficits.⁵⁰ India is planning to invest \$300 billion in infrastructure. The US could play a major role in development of India's agricultural, industrial, energy, water, and surface communication infrastructure given its technological superiority and large availability of resources. This will have a more visible and lasting impact on the relationship.

Traditionally, proliferation issues have been a major stumbling block in the relationship. However, ongoing US efforts to develop a missile defense system may yet provide a new basis for cooperation between the two countries. While the United States has its own reasons and concerns that have led it to develop the program of missile defense, India believes it too faces a serious threat from missiles in its neighborhood, and that there is a great danger of these weapons falling into the hands of terrorist elements in the region. India remains wary of China's continuing assistance to Pakistan's strategic programs.⁵¹ As an issue that is likely to dominate the proliferation debate in the coming years, missile defense thus provides an opportunity for India and the United States to be on the same side.

Uncertainties

These arguments should not lead to an impression that India-US relations are completely out of the woods and that there are no difficulties ahead. Substantive differences over the nature and goal of India-US partnership have the potential to complicate future relations. A short list of issues in which Washington and New Delhi will find it difficult to collaborate would include Pakistan, China, Iran, Iraq, the World Trade Organization, and the future of the global nonproliferation regime. India would continue to prefer a multipolar world order, whereas the Bush administration more than Clinton's is likely to assert US dominance and insist on Washington's right to act unilaterally.⁵² However, salvation for the relationship lies in heeding to what Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared on the eve of his July visit to Washington: "We [India] are an independent power; we are not a client state; we are not a supplicant. As two equal societies we must explore together where there is convergence of interest and work together."⁵³

Unwillingness to let go of potential hotspots or more precisely, holding future progress hostage to differences over contentious issues, could become a major stumbling block. The US must thwart any or all measures that could impinge Indian freedom of latitude when exercising foreign relations.⁵⁴ Democracies go by the will of their people which must be accepted and respected by both sides.

Impatience on the part of American Industry to fully appreciate the success already achieved by India's incremental economic decentralization in an overpopulated, ethnically and religiously diverse nation, in a poor and unstable neighborhood will undoubtedly hamper the development of stronger economic ties. If India hopes to achieve a goal of \$10 billion US investment annually, progress must be made on the second round of reforms to convince skeptical American investors that the entrenched Indian bureaucracy, the outdated regulations, and the worsening fiscal deficit are being tackled pragmatically so as to ensure continued growth on investment.⁵⁵

Nothing affects Indian public consciousness more than issues related to Pakistan and terrorism. These are viewed as the principal security threats to the nation. India, while appreciative of the positions adopted by the US government on these issues, will continue to closely watch US policies and action to see if current positions will be sustained or roll back. India will also insist that while its policy is one of restraint, it will, in the ultimate analysis, act as its national interests demand. The understanding that the United States has shown so far to India's concerns is to a large extent dependent on the policy of restraint India has followed. Any change in that policy may result in adverse effects on the relationship. If the US-led war on

terrorism stays focused on those groups with an international reach, India could quickly become disheartened by the lack of U.S. action against groups with only a regional reach. India will hope to see action on the US President's agreement on this aspect with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's assertion that, both countries "must fight terrorism where ever it exists, because terrorism anywhere threatens democracy everywhere."⁵⁶

Paradoxically, success may also breed uncertainties, for the rapid turn around in India-US relations carries with it the risk of expectations rising far beyond reality in both countries. On the Indian side, there is a risk that India's slow but steady pace may not be able to keep up with the enthusiasm generated within various agencies of the US government for a rapid expansion of contacts. The magnitude and dimension of this new relationship is still sinking in and it will take some time before the people of India realize its full potential and implications. Moreover, differences between the two countries on issues related to India's nuclear weapons and missile program have not completely vanished and may re-emerge if not handled carefully by both sides.

Finally, there is the question of whether India, especially as its economic and military strength grows, will be comfortable with this partnership in the long run. US unilateralism often causes serious anguish even to the closest of its allies like the UK, Canada, and Japan. While no major conflict of interest appears to be on the horizon, it is impossible to imagine that the relationship will remain completely free of differences. Healthy respect for India as an equal partner can overcome most of these problems.

Conclusion

The bitter aftertaste of the divergent policies during the Cold War need not vitiate the prospects for greater engagement in the emerging period, principally because many of the underlying causes that made them "estranged democracies" are now gone.⁵⁷ The United States has underlined its intentions to pursue its relations with New Delhi based on an acknowledgement of India's rising global status, military might, and economic prowess. "The United States and India," President Bush has declared in this regard, "have ambitious goals for our partnership. We have unprecedented opportunities in this world. We can look to the future with confidence because our relationship has never been better. America and India have been global leaders and we have been good friends and when we work together there is no limit to what we can achieve."⁵⁸

So today, at the beginning of the new millennium, the bilateral relationship between these two critical democracies is poised on the edge of great achievements. But both nations need to

draw lessons from the past decades, and understand each others national strategy and the intricacies of being democracies for policymakers to steer relations in the proper direction. The achievements thus far notwithstanding, the relationship is still fragile and requires a great deal of tending and constant attention lest it lapse into dormancy or neglect.⁵⁹

Endnotes

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² Satu P Limaye, *US - Indian Relation: The Pursuit of Accommodation* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1993), 5.

³ The Monitors View, "Embracing India as a Rising Power," *Christian Science Monitor*, 31 March 2005, [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 21 March 2007.

⁴ Dennis Klux, *India and the United States: Estranged Democracies* (New York: National Defense University Press Publications, 1992).

⁵ The United States expected to obtain the full support of the Indian people in the war effort.

⁶ B Shiva Rao. *Framing of India's Constitution*, Vol. II. Para 8 of the tenth to fourteenth report submitted by India to the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, available from <http://www.unhchr.ch/tbs/doc.nsf/c12563e7005d936d4125611e00445ea9/a035833a480e4514802565530037bf7e>; Internet, accessed 17 October 2006. India was among the few developing countries that participated in the drafting of the UDHR in 1947/48 by the newly established UN Commission on Human Rights. Its representative, Dr. Hansa Mehta, along with Eleanor Roosevelt (who chaired the Commission), were the only women involved in the drafting process.

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⁹ C Raja Mohan, "Fostering Strategic Stability and Promoting Regional Cooperation," in *Engaging India*, ed. Gary K Bertsch, Seema Gahlaut, and Anupam Srivastava (New York: Routledge, 1999), p.24.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Michael R. Kraig and James Henderson, "US Strategies for Regional Security: South Asia," *Report of the 42nd Strategy for Peace Conference* (Warrenton, VA, Oct 2001).

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¹⁵ Ravi Tomar, "India-US Relations in a Changing Strategic Environment," *Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Group*, 25 June 2002.

¹⁶ Remarks by U.S. President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee, The White House, 09 Nov 2001, available from http://www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/2001/vajpayee_bush_nov_9_01.htm; Internet; accessed 17 October 2006.

¹⁷ Mallik, 91.

¹⁸ Robert M. Hathaway, 'Unfinished Passage India, Indian-Americans, and the US Congress', *Washington Quarterly* 24 (Spring 2001): 21-34.

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²⁰ Ibid.

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²² Joint statement issued after Third Meeting of the India – US Defense Policy Group available from <http://meadev.nic.in/speeches/def-jtstmt-indo-us.htm>; Internet; accessed 17 October 2006.

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²⁴ Kanwal Sibal, "Indian Foreign Policy: Challenges and Prospects," Presentation at Geneva Forum by the Foreign Secretary of India, 23 January 2003.

²⁵ Robert M. Hathaway, "The US – India Courtship: From Clinton to Bush," in *India as an Emerging Power*, 25.

²⁶ Mallik, 88-89.

²⁷ David Jablonsky, "The State of the National Security State," *Parameters* 32, (Winter 2002-2003): 13-15.

²⁸ Robert M. Hathaway, "The US – India Courtship : From Clinton to Bush," in *India as an Emerging Power*, 28-29.

²⁹ John C. Holzman, "A Golden Opportunity: The Next Steps in U.S. – Indian Relations," *Strategic Forum*, Institute for National Strategic Studies National Defense University, 182, (July 2001): 2-3.

³⁰ Parag Khanna, C Raja Mohan, "Getting India Right," *Policy Review* 135, (Feb/ March 2006): 43 [database on-line]; available from ProQuest; accessed 17 October 2006.

³¹ Ibid 43.

³² Dennis Kux, "India's Fine Balance," *Foreign Affairs*, 81 (May-Jun 2002): 96.

³³ Parag Khanna, C Raja Mohan, "Getting India Right," 43.

³⁴ John H. Gill, "US- India Military to Military Interaction," in *US- India Strategic Co-operation into the 21st Century*, ed Sumit Ganguly, Brian Shoup, and Andrew Scobell, Routledge, (New York: Routledge, 2006), 122.

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⁵² Robert M. Hathaway, "The US – India Courtship: From Clinton to Bush," in *India as an Emerging Power*, 29.

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