

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**FROM ESTRANGEMENT TO ENGAGEMENT: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN
INDO-U.S. RELATIONS AND THE ROLES OF THEIR ARMED FORCES**

by

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ABSTRACT

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After a fifty-year gap, relations between India and U.S., the world's largest and powerful democracies, have shown a marked upswing. These relations had long been colored by the US Cold War perception of nonalignment as practiced by India. India's role as a de-facto Soviet protégée during the Cold War period also compounded problems between the two, as did the US supply of arms and equipment to Pakistan. Relations reached their lowest ebb with the dispatch of the *USS Enterprise* to the Bay of Bengal in Dec 1971. Current Indo—US convergence is evident in the democratic values the two nations share. Remolding post-Cold War Asia; combating terrorism and Islamic extremism; discouraging proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD); security of Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) and protecting access to the energy resources and markets in the region are engaging both countries. This SRP examines the threats and opportunities in the current Indo-U.S. relationship. The study focuses on the new framework that has evolved and assesses its potentiality for meeting both countries' aspirations of cultivating a natural alliance and, in light of their shared security interests, also analyzes the role of the militaries in furthering the strategic partnership.

FROM ESTRANGEMENT TO ENGAGEMENT: THREATS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN INDO-U.S. RELATIONS AND THE ROLES OF THEIR ARMED FORCES

At the dawn of a new century, U.S. President Clinton and Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee resolved to create a closer and qualitatively new relationship between the United States and India. Their joint statement resolved:

We are nations forged from many traditions and faiths, proving year after year that diversity is our strength. From vastly different origins and experiences, we have come to the same conclusions: that freedom and democracy are the strongest bases for both peace and prosperity, and that they are universal aspirations, constrained neither by culture nor levels of economic development. There have been times in the past when our relationship drifted without a steady course. As we now look towards the future, we are convinced that it is time to chart a new and purposeful direction in our relationship. Globalization is erasing boundaries and building networks between nations and peoples, economies and cultures. The world is increasingly coming together around the democratic ideals India and the United States have long championed and lived by.¹

Together these two democracies represent a fifth of the world's population and more than a quarter of the world's economy. In many ways, the character of the 21st century world will depend on the success of their cooperation for peace, prosperity, democracy and freedom.

Remarkably, South Asia has never been considered a region of front-line policy interest for the United States. But as the U.S. looks out towards the century ahead, no region of the world will be more vital to America's long-term military, economic, and political interests than Asia.² The part of Asia that is now receiving substantial attention of many American diplomats, generals, strategists, and business leaders is South Asia and, in particular, India.

To understand how the U.S. view of India has changed, one has only to look back over the last six decades. Since India's independence in 1947, successive administrations in Washington and Delhi have approached each other tentatively with episodic engagement on the one hand, but with wariness and even downright opposition on the other, resulting in sharp political, ideological, and economic differences.

The Lost Half Century

During the Cold War years (an era also marked by the dissolution of European colonies), India was politically underrated by the United States due to U.S. preoccupation with the Soviet Union and China because of ideological, military, and political rivalries that divided the global community. Initial suspicions about post-independence India stemmed from its unwillingness to commit to the Western alliance in the emerging Cold War, as well as India's adoption of a quasi-socialist economy. Convinced by the British, Americans subscribed to the thesis that while

Islam would bind Pakistan (a state carved out of India) firmly, India—with its inherent diversity of languages, culture, and religion— would not be able to keep itself united. India's policy of non-alignment, and later its tilt toward the Soviet Union following the U.S. embrace of Pakistan in the mid-fifties further alienated U.S. opinion.

The relationship between the two countries blossomed briefly during the Korean War during which India served as a member of the United Nations (UN) Armistice Commission, but it soon ran aground with the twin crises of 1956—Hungary and Suez. While India condemned the Israel-French-British invasion of Suez, it was viewed as reluctant in condemning the brutal crushing of the Hungarian revolt which reinforced the perception of its tilt towards the USSR. It took nearly twelve years for the first American president, Dwight Eisenhower, to visit India in 1959. Subsequently, the Kennedy Administration responded favorably to Indian pleas for military help during the 1962 Sino-Indian war in the Himalayas.³

Yet relations with the United States nonetheless continued to remain estranged throughout the Sixties. During the 1971 Bangladesh war that India fought with Pakistan, the Nixon Administration dispatched an aircraft carrier, the *USS Enterprise*, into the Bay of Bengal to pressure India to halt its military campaign against Pakistan. However, the war ended with India's liberation of Bangladesh prior to the ship's arrival. The deployment prompted India to conduct its 1974 nuclear test to assert its freedom of action. The relationship continued to remain cool in the seventies and eighties due to American preoccupation with the Cold War and Vietnam; its involvement with Pakistan to oust USSR from Afghanistan; and other events in the Middle East which had taken priority in U.S. foreign policy.

India's greater openness to the world economy from 1991 made a qualitative difference in U.S. perceptions. However, the political and the bureaucratic elite in the U.S. continued to view India for quite some time with the same hostility that had characterized the earlier decades. Differences over nuclear non proliferation issues, especially India's opposition to the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), strengthened further the traditional U.S. perception of India as a major "spoiler"—intent on obstructing America's benign designs to make the world safe from WMD. Paradoxically, the Indian nuclear tests of May 1998 finally prompted U.S. policymakers to sit up and seriously acknowledge India's security concerns and its capabilities.

The U.S. Security Strategy and Policy (2002)

In its 2002 National Security Strategy and Policy, the Bush Administration identified "freedom, democracy, and free enterprise"⁴ as the means for achieving a decisive victory for the forces of freedom in the foreseeable future. It seeks to create a balance of power that favors

human freedom: conditions in which all nations and all societies can choose for themselves the rewards and challenges of political and economic liberty.⁵

The strategic goal to make the world not only safe but better implies: U.S. support for political and economic freedom, peaceful relations with other states and respect for human dignity. This can be done if the United States, as the pre-eminent global power, decides to take the lead in maintaining a legitimate and stable world order. A stable world order is crucially dependent on the stability and legitimacy of regional orders. In turn, the stability and legitimacy of regional orders relies on their respective pivotal powers' collective ability to ameliorate, if not eliminate, the likelihood of major interstate and intrastate conflicts.

Transformation from Estrangement to Engagement

In dealing with regional stability in the geo-strategic space of Asia, the U.S. finds Russia an anti-terrorism partner, but one caught in the midst of a transition to a democratic future. "Russia's uneven commitment to the basic values of free market economy and dubious record in proliferation of WMD remains a matter of great concern for her."⁶ China, the other regional power, "on the other hand has not yet made the next series of fundamental choices about the character of their state."⁷ These issues add complexity in building relationships with them; therefore, "America proposes to encourage the advancement of democracy and economic openness in both nations because they are the best foundation for domestic stability and international order."⁸ In developing agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of power in Asia, the U.S. appears to have concluded that, measured by any indices; India is undoubtedly the pre-eminent and pivotal power in South Asia with a corresponding interest in maintaining regional stability. It is also a status quo power without irredentist claims on its neighbors. It does aspire to act as the security manager in the region, but largely in a benevolent fashion⁹ in conformity with the Gujral doctrine (named after the former Indian prime minister). It has a common interest with the U.S. in the free flow of commerce and in the throughput across the vital sea lanes of communication in the Indian Ocean. It shares U.S. interest in fighting terrorism, Islamic extremism, and in creating a strategically stable Asia.

Americans have reassessed India's overall potential and have generally concluded that if the US is to stay competitive in business over the long term, its relationship with India will be important. To stay competitive in business, the U.S. has three primary needs, which could be fulfilled by India:

- First, India is providing the United States with considerable brain power to sustain American inventiveness.¹⁰ India is an English-speaking, multicultural democratic

country and Indian brainpower has already demonstrated its contribution to the U.S. economy. More and more American companies are establishing their Research & Development (R&D) facilities in India to cut costs on R&D.

- Second, with its ability to cut costs through outsourcing and providing a large market itself, India offers several economic possibilities. Although some critics in the U.S. attack outsourcing of software jobs, the reality is that Indian employees make American companies more profitable, more flexible, and therefore, better placed to provide American consumers with the products and services they need at the prices they want.
- Third, with its mushrooming middle class, India has yet to be tapped as a market. Expanding trade with India will provide the U.S. with another secure market for its consumer products besides China.

Globalization is an emerging and dynamic reality. Though it has serious deficiencies, it is an inevitable and irreversible development. The world is economically so integrated that cheap Chinese products and commerce have managed to contain inflation, despite rising energy prices. Riding the economic boom, China has become a heavyweight in the Asian geo-political space, but its self-proclaimed “peaceful rise” cannot entirely conceal its hegemonic ambition for long. Many observers feel that in the face of increasing competition, China may not play the international game according to rules.¹¹ On the other hand democratic India eventually will become the most populous country and its population will be comparatively younger than China. Its non-working-to-working demographic ratio will be relatively better than China’s. India will also have an advantage in terms of growing skilled manpower. To a significant extent, as the U.S. and China compete for the pre-eminent position in the international hierarchy, India as the future third-greatest market power and with the largest reservoir of scientific talent will be in a position to influence the result.¹²

The recent emphasis by the U.S. Administration on creation of a “democratic community of states,” based on a popularized version of “democratic peace,” can serve to improve India-U.S. relations, since it provides India with a major built-in advantage. The two states most crucial to legitimizing the idea of a global democratic community are obviously the world’s largest democracy (India) and the world’s most powerful and oldest democracy (the United States). Clearly their partnership is essential for this idea of “peaceful global democracy” to be taken seriously.

From the Indian perspective,¹³ the culmination of a number of independent developments has coalesced to create the climate conducive for a transformed relationship with the United States:

- The end of the Cold War, new power relationships, and consequent rearrangement of interstate ties.
- Revisiting the relationship and addressing contemporary opportunities and challenges.
- A clearer understanding of global threats that emanate less from nation-states and more from trans-national non-state sources (e.g., terrorism, WMD proliferation, pandemics, natural disasters, and narcotics) and thus require international cooperation.
- Generation of a long-term perspective and desire for long-term convergences in a world dominated by knowledge-driven societies.
- Economic reforms and a growing integration with the global economy.

So from the ashes of estrangement has emerged the need for transforming the U.S.-India relationship through engagement. India and America are natural allies for many reasons, and not purely because of the optimism exhibited by India's former Prime Minister Vajpayee.¹⁴

The world's largest and most powerful democracies finally seem to be getting their act together, working to play their part in the new world order.¹⁵ Building on common values and a mutual vision, eight major initiatives to strengthen the Indo-U.S. relationship were laid out recently by President Bush and Indian P.M. Manmohan Singh:

- Global Democracy Initiative.
- U.S.-India Disaster Response.
- HIV/AIDS Partnership.
- Revitalized U.S.-India Economic Dialogue.
- Completion of Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP).
- U.S.-India Energy Dialogue.
- Space Cooperation.
- U.S.-India Agricultural Alliance.

Their agreement to these programs in July 05¹⁶ indicates that the United States and India have taken steps to transform their bilateral relationship.

Convergence of Interests and Benefits from Opportunities

To analyze the relationship's convergence and associated emerging threats and opportunities, vital national interests of the predominant power in the relationship need to be analyzed first, then compared with the other partner's interests. The US vital interests are:

- Prosecuting the Global War on Terror.
- Preventing the spread of WMD, including to terrorist groups.
- Dealing with the rise of Chinese power.
- Ensuring a reliable supply of energy from the Persian Gulf.
- Revitalization of the domestic economy.
- Stability and peace in the Indian Ocean region.
- Regional power equation in Asia/South Asia.

India has the second-largest Muslim population in the world; in the past fifteen years India has lost more people to Islamic *jihadi* killers than any other nation. India will continue to do everything it can to eliminate the threat of terrorism which the U.S. also faces, without any need for prodding from Washington. It is unlikely that any other ally, especially one with a large Muslim population would be as steadfast over the long term.

Weapons of mass destruction are a shared danger as well. Along with the U.S., New Delhi and Mumbai (India's financial capital) rank with Israel and London as other likely WMD targets because of the hateful place India occupies in *jihadi* ideology. This is a compelling reason for India to be at America's side in the period ahead.

Like some in Washington, India is enormously attentive to the rise of the People's Republic of China. Indians understand better than most that Asia is being fundamentally changed by the weight of China's economic power and diplomatic skill. As the Indian leadership thinks strategically, its contingency planning is likely to be aligned and coordinated with the U.S. for Asia to have an economic counterweight.¹⁷

With respect to energy security, both the United States and India are hugely dependent on foreign sources for their energy needs. About a quarter of the crude oil imported by the United States comes from the Middle East. India, meanwhile, imports nearly 75 percent of its crude from there. The Eight-Point program signed by President Bush and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh includes provision of sale of U.S. civil nuclear reactors to India, both to reduce its demand for Persian Gulf energy and to ease the environmental impact of India's vibrant economic growth.¹⁸

The economic potential of an Indo-US partnership is immense, with bright prospects for expanded trade and investment. U.S.-Indian trade figures are currently small; even so, the United States is India's largest trading partner. U.S. exports to India grew by 25 percent in 2004 and are expected to grow from the present 30 billion dollars to 60 billion by 2010. The United States is the largest cumulative investor in India, in both foreign direct investment and portfolio investment. More than 50 percent of America's Fortune 500 companies now outsource some of their information technology (IT) services to Indian companies.

The United States is also willing to sell F-16 and F-18 fighter aircraft to India. The two nations are considering, co-production and licensing agreements for the aircraft and other advanced U.S. weapons systems.¹⁹ Given the strategic challenges ahead, the United States should want the Indian armed forces to be equipped with the best weapons systems—and that often means buying American. To boost defense trade and commerce, the United States must become a reliable²⁰ long-term supplier through co-production and licensed-manufacturing arrangements and desist from its previous inclination to interrupt defense supplies to India during crises.

There is a growing recognition in the U.S. Military that access to India enables the U.S. to get closer to the entire area of instability from the Persian Gulf to Southeast Asia, including Central Asia and the vital “commons” of the Indian Ocean. India's well-developed infrastructure can assist U.S. power projection forces in many ways.²¹ This not only will secure international acknowledgement of India's key role in maintaining regional stability, but will also contribute to a strong and viable Indo-U.S. partnership.

Not only do their vital national interests coincide, but the two countries share common values as well. The policies of the United States and India are built on the same solid moral foundation. Therefore an “Alliance of Democracy” could supplant a more traditional military alliance to address the challenges of the future globalized world. This has become even more central to American foreign policy, given the march of freedom across the Greater Middle East and President Bush's emphasis on the growth of pluralism, democracy, and democratic institutions in that region.

In November 2005, the US Administration presented its assessment to Congress in order to secure support for its emerging India policy. One of the key spokesmen was R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, who testified to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee stating that current initiatives with India make excellent sense for several reasons.²²

- To Build Democratic Institutions in the Region and Worldwide . Democracy and development are linked, and effective democratic governance is a precondition to healthy economic development. Both countries have also contributed to the UN's Democracy Fund to make this happen. India could share its democratic experience with Central Asian countries and other nations in its neighborhood that are having a difficult time in making the transition from authoritarianism to democracy. [Author's note: More needs to be done to promote human rights and democracy in autocratic Myanmar (Burma).]
- Shared Interest in Reforms at the United Nations . A vigorous Indian engagement with the U.S. in the ongoing process of reforms at the UN will serve the interests of its members. India has much to offer in moving reform efforts ahead. [Author's note: In the process, India seeks U.S. support in its strong claim to a permanent seat in the Security Council.]
- Bilateral and Global Economic Challenges . The U.S. and India have a great opportunity to work together to overcome challenges associated with India's growing economy and deal with India's shortage of foreign capital and investment. Such a relationship could play a positive role in shaping the world's economic future. The U.S. also looks forward to India's commitment to purchase American civil and military aircraft and to open its doors for further trade.
- U.S.-India Cooperation for Regional Peace and Stability . India is one of the largest international donors to Afghanistan's reconstruction and works closely with the U.S. India and the United States share the goal of bringing democracy back in Nepal. In Sri Lanka, both support the government's efforts to recover from the tsunami and return to the peace process. [Author's note: The fact that Sri Lanka's President chose India for his maiden foreign tour after assuming office on 18 November 2005 highlights the significance of India in Sri Lanka's domestic and foreign policies.]
- Indian Participation in the Proliferation Security Initiative . India demonstrated the rapidly growing capability of its maritime fleet and Navy in meeting the challenges posed by the catastrophic Tsunami that hit the Indian Ocean region in December 04. Indian support for the multi-national Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI) would be a boon to the participating nations' goal of tracking and interdicting dangerous goods and WMD cargoes world-wide.

- Convincing Iran to Return to Negotiations . The U.S. has welcomed India's vote at the International Atomic Energy Agency in September to find Iran in noncompliance with its international obligations. By so doing, India has unequivocally demonstrated its commitment to the relationship with the U.S. [Author's note: This is particularly significant considering India's strategic ties and interests with Iran, which stand potentially jeopardized by India's pursuit of an improved relationship with the United States.]
- Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative Benefits . All the steps that India has pledged will strengthen the international nonproliferation regime and align with efforts to prevent the spread of WMD. Nuclear power plants can help India modernize in an environmentally friendly manner. U.S. companies as a result, will be able to enter India's lucrative and growing energy market, potentially providing jobs for thousands of Americans.
- Building People-to-People and Private Sector Cooperation between India and the U.S. The new U.S.-India partnership is not and cannot be just between the two governments. This partnership should be reinforced by equally powerful expansion of people-to-people ties and business growth. Over 85,000 Americans are living in India, and the U.S. has two million citizens and legal permanent residents of Indian origin. The U.S. accounts for nearly 14 percent of total tourist arrivals in India—the highest of any country. There are more Indian students in the United States today than from any other country in the world. In essence, there exists the basis for development of a true, comprehensive, across-the-board, engagement between India and the United States governments, societies and peoples. [Author's note: Consequently, on issues connected to individual liberty, freedom, rule of law, and democracy, India and the United States find themselves engaged over the long term. They are natural allies because there are only a few nations with which the United States shares in such a comprehensive way and with the same intensity, its vital national interests and democratic values.]

Convergence also makes sense from the Indian perspective, for the many of the same reasons that it does for the US. India is leading the knowledge revolution and is among the six major players in world politics, along with the US, the European Union, China, Japan and Russia. Along with China, it is invited to G-8 meetings of the world's leading industrial nations. India is a candidate for permanent membership of the UN Security Council and needs U.S.

support to make the final leap into permanent membership.²³ The U.S. has also agreed to send a package in the Chandrayaan-Indian lunar exploration mission set for 2008.²⁴ Such a joint effort is not only likely to capture the imagination of ordinary citizens in both countries, but will also establish India as a true regional aerospace power. This will prevent China's permanent nuclear-missile dominance over democratic India and help achieve a better overall power balance in the region.

Obstacles to Strategic Partnership

This does not imply that there are no longer any differences between the two countries, but there is certainly far more that unites than divides them. Indians see their country poor and vulnerable to stronger powers like the United States and China: threatened by terrorism from Pakistan, and always facing the peril that its many religious minorities and ethnic groups will unravel the country's unity. This pervasive self-awareness of India's weakness is the basis for many tensions between the U.S. and India. The Hindu nationalism of the previous Indian government was also partly rooted in this sense of vulnerability; so too is some of the protectionist and anti-free market sentiment that has historically dominated the dominant ruling Congress Party and India's left.

What irks the Indian strategic community most is the hyphenation with which the U.S. often treats India in relation to Pakistan, instead of an objective calculation of common interests and India's capability. Past U.S. policies have tended to develop with a bilateral focus in the South Asian region. As a result, the Pakistan factor impeded the maturation of a serious Indo-U.S. relationship.²⁵ For India to secure and preside over a stable and legitimate order in South Asia, Pakistan must not feel threatened over its security while acknowledging India's primacy on the continent. Only the United States can provide that reassurance needed by Pakistan in short term to sustain such a regional order.²⁶

Then there are differences on issues such as India's nuclear program. However a sustained bilateral dialogue with a frank exchange of concerns has led to a far better mutual understanding.²⁷ If one goes by the Non Proliferation Treaty's (NPT) concepts and objectives rather than its literal text, then it is difficult to make a case against the July 18 2005 agreement in which India agreed to all protocols applicable to a nuclear weapons state (NWS). This is also the U.S. Administration's position; however, the U.S. Congress may have a different view on the subject. Bringing India into the fold is not only a gain for international non-proliferation efforts, but is also indispensable for a new global consensus on non-proliferation. India has accepted additional obligations by strengthening its export control regime and committing to non-transfer

of reprocessing and enrichment technologies. Additionally, India is augmenting international efforts to limit the spread of WMD-related technologies and does not view clandestine proliferation activities as legitimate. Unlike other countries, it believes in total nuclear disarmament and is ready to abide by its commitment to a world, free of nuclear weapons. India's stance should be seen in this regard and with respect to its historically proven track record. It should not be grouped with Pakistan, North Korea, Iran, or other countries that have been involved in proliferation.

India's pursuit of nuclear energy is absolutely essential to sustain its economic growth. As the Indian Foreign Secretary said recently on the issue of nuclear energy:

Our future as a driving force of a global knowledge partnership cannot be served by maintaining technology denials. The aspirations of the Indian people for a better economic future cannot be sustained by restricting their energy access. Above all, any vision of a future must make clear to the Indian people that they are a partner, not a target. We hope that this is the spirit in which the July 18 Agreement will be approved through necessary legislation in the Congress.²⁸

Indo-U.S. Defense Cooperation –a Catalyst

Indo-U.S. Defense Cooperation gained momentum with the "Kicklighter Proposals," a seminal document that propelled defense relations. These proposals reversed the negative pattern of previous years, during which India did not enjoy substantive cooperation with the U.S. A further step forward was taken in Jan 1995 with the signing of the "Agreed Minutes on Defense Relations" between the two governments. Concerns within both countries about ulterior motives, relative gains, and degrees of reciprocity²⁹ have worked against this relationship, reducing it to an engagement-for-engagement's sake.

The Indo-U.S. military-to-military relationship has been driven by the Defense Policy Group (DPG), which is the highest body for determining the defense relationship between the two nations and the forum for discussions on issues of mutual interest. The DPG sets the policy, gives directions for the military relationship, and approves events and other recommendations brought to its notice by sub-groups such as the Military Cooperation Group (MCG); the Security Cooperation Group, responsible for all aspects of weapon and equipment; the Senior Technology Security Group responsible for technology security and transfer; the Security Technology Group, responsible for research and development; and the recently constituted Defense Procurement & Production Group. On behalf of the U.S., Pacific Command (PACOM) became the executive agent for coordination of service-specific agenda. On the Indian side these responsibilities are handled by the Army HQ and Integrated Defense HQ.

Nowhere is the engagement between the two countries more visible than in defense and military-related fields.³⁰

While this is the first all-encompassing strategic-level military-to-military engagement as far as India is concerned; the United States has engaged in military relationships over a number of decades and thus has substantial expertise. Therefore, the United States should consider taking the lead in developing a clear road map for this endeavor, which should be based upon a joint vision for mutual security and benefit. The engagement philosophy should embrace the following thematic principles:

- Equality, pragmatism, and reciprocity (diffused rather than specific).³¹
- Mutual sharing of doctrinal, technological and communication objectives for reciprocal advantages.
- Building capability of both militaries to serve jointly as a part of a coalition. Since modularity and the transformation process is underway in the U.S. Army, brigade-sized combat teams/task forces could be identified. In addition to the assimilation of technology, it will be essential to integrate net-centric warfare principles, joint warfare procedures, and doctrines for multinational operations.
- Rapid deployment/operations, both strategically and tactically.
- Flexibility in crisis response options.

Functionalities Impacting Military Cooperation and Recommendations

Some of the challenges and corresponding recommendations for enhancing the functionality of military cooperation include:

- Pacific Command (PACOM) covers only half of India's strategic interests and concerns—which lie to its East. Many of India's pressing strategic concerns lie along the Red Sea in the West and also include the Central Asian republics in the North; however, these fall outside PACOM's area of responsibility (AOR).³² This has serious implications for cooperation in countering cross-border terrorism and Islamic extremism, protecting energy flows, and managing stability in Central Asia and Afghanistan.³³ The Central Command (CENTCOM)-PACOM interface at these strategic seams creates serious breakdowns in communications between Washington and Delhi on many important issues. PACOM has neither the authority nor the means to engage across India's full range of strategic interests. One scholar has noted that

“As the world and its strategic realities change, so must our institutions adapt and change lest they become ineffectual and obstacles to the realization of our strategic interests.”³⁴ Until the U.S. Command Structure adapts to this reality, expanded interaction between the Indian military and Central Command, including liaison officers, could address these concerns.

- There is a lack of overall coherence in the military relationship, such as a common vision or guidelines defining the way organizations should identify priorities or build engagement plans. The organizations responsible for the different components of the relationship base their decisions on different matrices, priorities, and requirements. Each develops and implements its program with little understanding of how its decisions and activities might affect the overall relationship. This can be mitigated by better coordination and a comprehensive overarching focus. The DPG and the MCG should convene before the services specific Executive Steering Groups (ESG) to provide “top–down” vision, end state, policy guidelines, and bureaucratic cover for the services as they plan and execute the cooperation program.³⁵
- India’s highly centralized decision-making process contrasts with the U.S. system in which decision-making is decentralized and responsibility is delegated downward. The Indian military’s security-related insulation from foreigners adversely affects partnership programs and initiatives at the functional level. It hinders development of personal relationships, which is essential for success. Hopefully as trusts builds, the Indian system will decentralize.
- India, being new to this game of military relationships appears to lack the institutional capability to support a broad-based relationship. Americans who interface with the Ministry of Defense and military services are likely to gain the impression that their Indian counterparts are not fully prepared for a comprehensive relationship. India must build a functional and empowered organization to remove any such erroneous impressions.
- The scope and methods of exchanging information concerning terrorism, nuclear and bio-related terrorist activities, arms smuggling, piracy, counter-narcotics, and disaster-related capabilities are limited. Institutionalized structures for real-time exchange of information are required for the War on Terror to succeed.

- Regional and sub-regional exchanges and interactions are lacking and require more sustained efforts.

The Framework Defense Agreement

To address some of these issues, on 28 June 2005 Indian Defense Minister Pranab Mukherjee signed a ten-year defense agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld during his visit to Washington. "The United States and India have entered a new era," said the statement issued after the signing of the agreement, which came three months after Washington announced its intention to help India become a "major world power." The Framework Agreement builds on past successes, seeks to seize new opportunities, and charts a course for the U.S.-India defense relationship. This is the first time that India has signed a formal Defense Relationship Agreement, a departure from long-standing Indian policy.

India has a long tradition of peacekeeping activities—having participated in twenty-five missions in the last fifty years and is currently the world's third-largest contributor. As envisioned in the defense agreement, it could play an important part in supporting future United States nation-building efforts around the world, provided these efforts are legitimized by the UN or some other multilateral institution. India would indeed be more proactive in this field if its regional and global role were recognized through permanent UN Security Council membership. The agreement also strengthens the two militaries' abilities to respond quickly to disaster situations.

"The other area where India could facilitate America's broader military-strategic interests is helping to promote strategic stability in South Asia."³⁶ Under the terms of the agreement, the two sides envisage joint patrolling of important sea-lanes in the Indian Ocean region, such as the Malacca Straits. This will be an important step in the implementation of the PSI, should India accede to it.

The agreement also states that the defense establishments of the two countries "will expand collaboration relating to missile defense." The agreement may raise anxiety in India's neighborhood, but it does remove the hyphenation in relations between India and Pakistan *vis-à-vis* U.S.

This agreement, a detailed and comprehensive document mentions "transforming" the relationship between the two countries on the basis of "shared national interests." The agreement goes on to state that the new defense relationship with its emphasis on strengthening the capabilities of their militaries, will promote security and help defeat terrorism and extremism. It "will be an element of the broader U.S.-India strategic partnership." The

agreement notes that the defense establishments of the two countries will "collaborate in multinational operations when it is in their common interests."

In sum, it is an all-encompassing capstone document which visualizes multinational operations. It places demands on the militaries, to set the stage for successful implementation of the will which manifests in the document.

Conclusion

Washington would like nothing better than to cement a strategic partnership with India as quickly as possible. However, pushing India too fast and too hard would be a mistake. With its complex democracy and diverse culture, India must be given the time to move at its own pace and in its own way. Patient deliberation will hasten the day when cooperation between the two countries can serve as an effective force for world peace.

The U.S. seeks to augment Indian power to enable the U.S. to "pursue a balance-of-power strategy among those major rising powers and key regional states in Asia which are not part of the existing U.S. alliance structure—including China, India, and a currently weakened Russia."³⁷ Such a balance would prevent any one of these from threatening the security of another, or that of the United States, while preventing any combination that would undercut U.S. strategic interests in Asia.

A purely objective analysis of India's self-interest would suggest that a stronger relationship—even with an undependable United States (as some will continue to charge until a final resolution on the nuclear energy issue emerges)—would serve India best. Military-to-military cooperation is an important catalyst for building this strategic relationship as it is focused towards meeting emerging common security challenges, which is a precursor for development.

Indo-US relations are thus at a crossroads. There are two clear choices: One is the road that the two countries have traveled before—a road that will maintain the status quo and keep some uneasy distance between the two democracies. The other, not without its challenges, recognizes the enormous changes of the last decade, appreciates emerging opportunities, and is prepared to depart from established positions to realize a genuine strategic partnership. Its realization could make an Indo-US partnership one of the key international relationship of the twenty-first century.

Endnotes

¹ William J. Clinton and Atal B. Vajpayee, "U.S.-India Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century," *Delhi Declaration*, 21 March 2000.

² Pete Engardio, "A New World Economy," *Business Week*, 22/29 August 2005, 52. The writer visualizes that balance of power will shift to the East, as China and India evolve.

³ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2004), 10.

⁴ George W. Bush, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 17 September 2002), Foreword.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. The National Security Strategy articulates the following goals: first, to champion aspirations for human dignity; second, to strengthen alliances to defeat global terrorism and work to prevent attacks against us and our friends; third, to work with others to defuse regional conflicts; fourth, to prevent enemies from threatening us, our allies and our friends, with weapons of mass destruction; fifth, to ignite a new area of global economic growth through free market and free trade; sixth, to expand the circle of development by opening societies and building the infrastructure of democracy; seventh, to develop agendas for cooperative action with other main centers of global power; and, eighth, to transform America's national security institutions to meet the challenge and opportunities of the twenty-first century.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, Foreword.

⁹ Bhabani Sen Gupta, "India in the Twenty-First Century," *International Affairs*, 73, No. 2 (1997): 308-310.

¹⁰ National Academies panel of experts report, "U.S. Can Lose Edge to India, If..." 13 October 2005; available from <http://www.iarediff.com/money/index.html>; Internet; accessed 19 December 2005.

¹¹ Condoleezza Rice, "The Promise of Democratic Peace," *The Washington Post*, 11 December 2005, Op-Ed. The Secretary of State states that the "goal of U.S. statecraft is to help create a world of democratic, well governed states that can meet the needs of their citizens and conduct themselves responsibly in the international system." In this regard, incidences of the People Republic China's deviation from "international" norms are likely to raise concern about the quality of Chinese goods and violations of intellectual property rights.

¹² Excerpted from Conn Hallinan, "A Vote, a Strike, and a Sleight of Hand," *Asia Times*, 26 October 2005, quoting analyst Lora Saalman in *Japan Focus*, "The technical and military hardware provided by the United States promises to expand India's political, strategic and military footprint even beyond China," but that rather than pitting the two huge Asian powers against one another, "the United States may be setting up India to instead serve as a future strategic counterweight to US interests in Asia and abroad."

¹³ Shyam Saran "Transforming U.S.-India Relations: Forging a Strategic Partnership," 21 December 2005; available from <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/events/index.cfm?fa=eventDetail&id=839&&prog=zgp&proj=znpp,zsa,zusr>; Internet; accessed 26 December 2005.

¹⁴ C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave, 2004), 49.

¹⁵ Condoleezza Rice. The Secretary of State in the Op-Ed further stated: "that in times of unprecedented change, the traditional diplomacy of crisis management is insufficient. Instead, we must transcend the doctrines and debates of the past and transform volatile status quos that no longer serve our interests. What is needed is a realistic statecraft for a transformed world. President Bush outlined the vision for it in his second inaugural address: "It is the policy of the United States to seek and support the growth of democratic movements and institutions in every nation and culture, with the ultimate goal of ending tyranny in our world." This is admittedly a bold course of action, but it is consistent with the proud tradition of American foreign policy, especially as espoused by such recent presidents as Harry Truman and Ronald Reagan."

¹⁶ U.S. Department of State Fact Sheets, *Programs That Will Strengthen the Strategic Partnership between the United States and India* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of State, 18 July 2005). These entail the following: The first is the Completion of Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP) Initiative. The NSSP encompasses initiative and active cooperation in space, civil nuclear energy, and dual-use technology. Second is a revitalized U.S.-India Economic Dialogue covering trade, finance, the environment, and commerce. This initiative will help expand trade and investment links and promote modernization of India's infrastructure. Third, the U.S.-India Energy Dialogue seeks to strengthen energy security and promote stable energy markets. The dialogue ensures seeking of adequate and affordable supplies while addressing relevant environmental concerns. It includes five working groups to discuss common action on oil and gas, coal, energy efficiency, new and renewable technologies, and civil nuclear energy. Fourth is an initiative to enhance Joint Activities in Space Cooperation. The effort will include in-space navigation and cooperation in the commercial space arena. The two nations have expressed the readiness to expand cooperation on the Global Positioning System (GPS). The fifth program is the U.S.-India Global Democracy Initiative to aid developing democracies in which the two nations will support the UN Democracy Fund with major contributions, to provide assistance to build democratic institutions and develop appropriate human resources. Sixth is the U.S.-India Disaster Response Initiative, which proposes to build on the successful coordination, undertaken by the Tsunami Core Group. The initiative will establish an ongoing effort to prepare and conduct disaster relief operations in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. Seventh is the U.S.-India HIV/AIDS Partnership which involves coordinated alliances between U.S. and Indian companies and their governments to mobilize large resources from the private sector to support prevention, care, and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS. Finally, the U.S.-India Agricultural Alliance is a joint effort focusing on teaching, research, service, and commercial linkages that lead to developing and using innovations to achieve economic, social, and environmental benefits. The initiative seeks to take information and know-how directly to the farming community and shall promote technologies that minimize post-harvest wastage and alleviate food shortages.

¹⁷ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987), 514. Kennedy, after studying the economic change and military conflict from 1500 to 2000, included an analysis entitled "Problem of The United States: The Problem of Number One in Relative Decline." Kennedy wrote: "Although the United States is at present still in a class of its own economically and perhaps even militarily, it cannot avoid confronting the two greater tests which challenge the longevity of every major power that occupies the 'number one' position in world affairs; whether in military /strategic realm, it can preserve a reasonable

balance between the nation's perceived national defense requirements and the means it possesses to maintain those commitments; and whether, as an intimately related point, it can preserve the technological and economic basis of its power from erosion in the face of ever shifting patterns of global production. This test of American abilities will be greater because it, like Imperial Spain around 1600 or the British Empire around 1900, is the inheritor of a vast array of strategic commitments which had been made decades earlier, when the nation's political, economic and military capacity to influence world affairs seemed so much assured. In consequence the United States now runs the risk, so familiar to historians of the rise and fall of previous Great powers, of what might roughly be called 'imperial overstretch': that is to say, decision makers in Washington must face the awkward and enduring facts that the sum total of the United States' global interest and obligation is nowadays far larger than the country's power to defend them all simultaneously."

¹⁸ R. Ramachandran, "Behind the Bargain," *Frontline*, Vol. 22, Issue 16, 30 July-12 August 2005. The author contends that the "Bush-Manmohan Singh nuclear deal, which signifies a major shift in U.S. policy, is criticized as having led to the bartering away of the independence of India's nuclear program. Perhaps there is an unwritten *quid pro quo*—a commitment to buy U.S. reactors." The sale will require Congressional approval.

¹⁹ V. Jaynath, "Stage Set for India-U.S. Defense Cooperation," *The Hindu*, 08 October 2005. U.S. Boeing Integrated Defense System's Vice President and Chief Executive Officer expects "over the next 10 years, there could be \$15 billion market in India,"

²⁰ MAJ Greg Winston, USA, Office of Defense Cooperation New Delhi, "Defense Cooperation with India-Expanding Again," *The DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management* 27 (Summer 2005): 12. Foremost challenge to the defense cooperation with India as per the author lies in the waning perception within the Indian Ministry of Defense that the "U.S. may not be a politically reliable defense supplier, based on Indian experience with the U.S. sanctions over the years."

²¹ Excerpted from Stephen J. Blank, *Natural Allies? Regional Security in Asia and Prospects for Indo-American Strategic Cooperation* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, September 2005), 165, quoting Arun Sahgal, "India-US Not Quite in Step Yet," *Asia Times Online*, 21 August 2003.

²² R. Nicholas Burns, U.S. Under Secretary for Political Affairs, "Hearing on U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative," testimony given on 2 November 2005, linked from The State Department Home Page, available from <http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2005/55969.htm>; Internet; accessed 1 February 2006.

²³ Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh address to Joint Session of the U.S. Congress on 19 July 2005; available from http://www.indianembassy.org/pres_release/2005/July/23.htm; Internet; accessed 8 January 2006. The Prime minister on the reform of the United Nations stated, "The UN Security Council must be restructured as part of the reform process. In this context, you would agree that the voice of the world's largest democracy surely cannot be left unheard on the Security Council when the United Nations is being restructured."

²⁴ Diplomatic correspondent quoted Indian Foreign Secretary Mr Shyam Saran, "U.S. Payloads Likely to Be Accepted on Chandrayaan," *The Hindu*, 01 December 2005.

²⁵ Blank, 3.

²⁶ Excerpted from Blank, 139, quoting Michael Howard, "Reassurances and Deterrence; Western Defense in the 1980s," *Foreign Affairs* 61 (Winter 1982-83): 309-324. Howard employed this analytical point with regards to Europe, but it also holds for South Asia.

²⁷ Greg Winston, 5. The author states that "although differences remain, today the U.S. views India as a growing world power with which it has common strategic interests."

²⁸ Shyam Saran.

²⁹ COL Steven B. Sboto, U S Army "India and U.S. Military Cooperation and Collaboration: Problems, Prospects and Implications," *National Defense College, New Delhi, India Research Paper*," n.d., iii.

³⁰ "India-U.S. Defense Cooperation," available from http://www.indianembassy.org/New_Template/indodefense.asp; Internet; accessed 7 January 2006. The armed forces of the two countries have been holding joint exercises since the resumption of defense cooperation between them. Indian and US Special Forces have conducted airborne joint exercises 'Balance Iroquois' in Agra in May 2002, and 'Geronimo Thrust' in Alaska in September-October 2002. A joint air transport exercise 'Cope India' was conducted in Agra in October 2002. The Navies of the two countries have undertaken joint patrolling to secure the maritime trade routes in the Strait of Malacca. The largest-ever India-US naval exercises 'Malabar' were held off Kochi from September 26 to October 3, 2002 and featured over 1,500 Indian and American naval personnel conducting flying operations, anti-submarine warfare exercises and replenishment at sea. A peacekeeping command post exercise was held jointly in New Delhi in April 2003 and Special Forces of the two countries conducted joint counterinsurgency exercises "Vajra Prahar" in Mizoram in April 2003. A counterinsurgency and Jungle Warfare exercise "Yudha Abhyas" was held in Mizoram in March-April, 2004. 'Cope Thunder' multilateral exercises in Alaska held in July-August 2004 had Indian Air Force units, including 200 personnel and six Jaguar fighters. About 2,000 Indian and US Navy personnel took part in Malabar 04, a training exercise off the southwest coast of India on October 1-9, 2004. A major IAF-USAF air combat training Exercise 'Cope India 05' took place at Air Force Station Kalaikunda on 07-17 Nov 05. The USAF participation comprised twelve F-16, based at Misawa Air Base, Japan, and one E-3 AWACS based at Kadena Air Base, Okinawa. IAF participation comprised MiG-21 Bison, MiG-27, Mirage-2000, Mig 29 and Su-30 K. In addition, a few Su 30 MKI sorties were included for the first time.

³¹ Sboto, 59.

³² George W. Bush, *Unified Command Plan 1 March 2005* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, 1 March 2005), 11.

³³ Blank, 132. The author highlights that "India's anomalous position between USPACOM, which includes India in its AOR, and USCENTCOM, where it is absent but Pakistan and Afghanistan are in that command's AOR, causes it to be lost in 'a kind of 'strategic ether' between two powerful unified commands."

³⁴ *Ibid*, 168.

³⁵ Sbotto, 64.

³⁶ Amit Gupta, *The U.S.-India Relationship: Strategic Partnership or Complementary Interests* (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, February 2005), V.

³⁷ Ashley J. Tellis, "India as a New Global Power—An Action Agenda for the United States" 18 July 2005; available from <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17079&prog=zgp&proj=zsa>; Internet; accessed 20 December 2005.