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**QUESTIONABLE ASSUMPTIONS AND UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS:
REASSESSING THE U.S.-INDIA RELATIONSHIP**

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Joint Advanced Warfighting School in partial satisfaction of the requirements of a Master of Science Degree in Joint Campaign Planning and Strategy. The contents of this paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Joint Forces Staff College or the Department of Defense.

This paper is entirely my own work except as documented in footnotes.

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ABSTRACT

The George W. Bush administration came to power envisioning a new strategic partnership with India grounded in perceived common values and shared strategic interests, and this policy is being continued by the Obama administration. Washington's decision to build a unique relationship with India, however, is built on shaky economic, political, and cultural assumptions. Additionally, the United States fails to fully appreciate India's worldview and its enduring ties to the greater Asia region, which may ultimately lead New Delhi away from U.S. core interests. Furthermore, Washington's decisionmaking highlights deficiencies in the U.S. approach to strategic thinking and policy planning. Consequently, the Obama administration should conduct a review of U.S. India policy to ensure the United States is setting realistic foreign policy expectations and is comfortable with the future strategic implications of an intimate relationship with India.

For Seminar II

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INTRODUCTION

Before assuming office, George W. Bush and his top advisors conceptualized a new path for the U.S.-India relationship that was intended to be a cornerstone of his foreign policy approach to South Asia. The resulting policy was largely based on an assumption that India was already a major power and that the United States and India shared common strategic goals as large, diverse democracies. This was a curious assumption given the previous experiences of the two nations. During the Cold War, Washington and New Delhi were pulled in conflicting directions as India stood apart as a leading member of the Non-Aligned Movement and a friend of the Soviet Union. As a result of Cold War politics, therefore, India and the United States did not have a particularly friendly relationship on which to build in the post-Cold War period. At the time of the policy change, New Delhi and Washington were still at odds over India's 1998 nuclear tests, which had resulted in the United States placing extensive economic sanctions on India.

After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, the U.S. government continued to formulate a vision of active engagement with India that sought to remove roadblocks to cooperation and to shape India's role as an influential world player and key U.S. strategic partner. In 2005, the United States-India relationship seemed to round a corner and pick up speed as Washington and New Delhi agreed upon a series of cooperation mechanisms. The 2006 *National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (NSS) notes, "We have made great strides in transforming America's relationship with India, a major power

that shares our commitment to freedom, democracy, and rule of law.”¹ Concurrently, though, India was strengthening its network of key foreign partners, including Russia and China.

This trend of improving the U.S.-India relationship continues under the new administration. In 2009, President Barack Obama’s first state dinner was held in honor of India’s Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, and current high-level visits continue to solidify dialogue on important bilateral issues. Thus, the current Democratic and former Republican administrations both seem to agree that good relations with India are worth expending extensive political and intellectual capital for the same goal. Both have based U.S.-India relations on broader shared security concerns in both South Asia and globally, while also solidifying mutual economic opportunities. The U.S. government appears committed to developing India as a strategic partner, indicating that the outcome of this engagement is to assist in the rise of a new global power. Discourse inside and outside of government indicates a desire to paint the U.S.-India relationship as one that could alter the global framework. Yet, it remains to be seen how the new administration will manage the trajectory of improving ties and the associated long-term implications.

Some academics have interpreted Washington’s approach as a desire to seek a partnership with New Delhi so that it may dictate the outlines of the global political system for a longer period of time while that system is being challenged from developing states such as China. Thus, this partnership has the advertised potential to prolong U.S. superpower status, while shaping a more favorable future multipolar system that includes

¹ George W. Bush, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, D.C., March 2006), 39.

India as a major power. Yet, there are some significant assumptions underlying this interpretation that may not be sound.

An underlying U.S. strategic assumption is that the U.S. and India share the same ideas about power politics, economic development, and political and cultural values. However, India, like the United States, is a product of its geography and history. India's focus, however, is the greater Asia region. Washington should closely examine New Delhi's strategic vantage point and its increasingly sophisticated foreign policy as the U.S.-India partnership matures. Ultimately, India may not see itself as oriented towards the West, or at least not at the expense of its relationships in Asia with increasingly important powers. This reality should prompt the Obama administration to conduct a review of the strategic assumptions on which U.S. India policy rests to ensure the current path is best suited to furthering long-term U.S. interests.

The U.S. government and the American people need to internalize completely the potential risks, benefits, and unintended consequences of an ambitious endeavor that intends ultimately to reshape the global order. Additional coordinated strategic thinking and supporting analysis are required to understand and monitor Indian attitudes and policy over time. Because Washington's policy implementation is still in its infancy, it is not too late to inject this needed additional analysis and build flexibility into U.S. strategy. Furthermore, building a strategy that includes engagement with India will require a long view and an approach that synchronizes government across its departments and agencies. Cooperation between the public and private sectors, in particular to further economic cooperation as an important strategic means for achieving U.S. goals, will also be required.

This monograph seeks to highlight the asymmetry between Washington's foreign policy assumptions and approach toward India, on the one hand, and New Delhi's worldview and growing web of partnerships, on the other hand, and the inherent potential for miscalculation. Interestingly, part of U.S. misperception appears related to a tendency to discount the impact of millennia of history and the mindset of countries that must live in close contact with rivals and threatening groups. The United States should more clearly articulate its strategic vision, particularly in the face of an increasingly multipolar world still colored by the legacy of the Cold War. Against this backdrop, Washington should recalibrate its India policy, set attainable expectations, and look introspectively at its strategic planning with a broader strategic vision tempered by reality.

CHAPTER 1

Indian Realities: Emerging Regional Engagement

India occupies an interesting, and often complex, physical and political space. It must face complicated regional dynamics shaped by thousands of years of contact between diverse populations and the legacies of colonialism and the Cold War. India is located at the intersection of three strategic and cultural crossroads: Central Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. For this reason alone, it has the potential to influence a broad swath of regional and global issues. Its long coastline and perceived threats from neighboring states could lead to a requirement for impressive military capabilities that would not go unnoticed in the region. Thus, the path that India takes and the relationships it builds potentially has a significant impact on the global balance of power, regional security, and a range of associated U.S. interests.

If the U.S.-India bilateral relationship is to succeed, Washington must understand India, its history, its people, its government, and its unique viewpoint and interests. New Delhi currently does not stand on equal footing with Washington when it comes to its ability to manage political issues and interact within the international system, though this might change over time. Washington must continue to learn about its potential partner and closely monitor its evolution with an appreciation for how far India must come from a past colored by relative isolation to the West since independence in 1948.

India's international impact will radiate from its economic potential, but economic development will not be possible without a continuation of internal reform and opening to the outside world. Indian Prime Minister Jawaharal Nehru in the early 1960s noted

that “India’s overriding and most urgent task is to raise the standard of living of her people, and in order to achieve this, to carry out structural and organizational reforms.”¹

While these tasks endure, today’s context is much different than during Nehru’s tenure.

Reform has largely removed India’s cloak of government controls and veil of isolationism, opening a path towards broader prosperity for its people as it benefits from participation in the free market economy. New Delhi has been occupied with extensive government and private sector reforms. For example, very few industries remain part of the public sector. By and large, Indian companies are no longer subject to a licensing system that in prior decades required most Indian companies to obtain government permission to operate. A dearth of infrastructure remains a notable, but persistent, impediment to the transport of goods and the provision of services within and to and from India. Poverty in India is still widespread and wealth is highly concentrated in a small percentage of the largely urban population. Moving reforms farther ahead, including in the areas of labor law, agriculture, and fiscal policy may prove in the short-term to be politically unpalatable to the rural and poor majority. These people are increasingly active in Indian politics and may not support leaders who advocate better productivity in the future at the perceived expense of their current quality of life.² Yet implementing these reforms will prove vital both for India’s economy and potential for development. Ultimately, India’s economic development will dictate the extent and shape of U.S. - India relations and the weight India might carry internationally.

Sometimes slowing reform is India’s parliamentary system of government with a myriad of parties that reflect both regional and ethnic cleavages. This multi-party

¹ Jawaharal Nehru, “Changing India,” *Foreign Affairs* 41, no. 3 (April 1963): 455.

² Ashutosh Varshney, “India’s Democratic Challenge,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2007): 93.

political system sometimes gives small groups disproportionate influence in foreign and domestic policy decisions. The Indian government is highly bureaucratic, and issues tend to be filtered up to senior levels for decisions, which can cause policy logjams and delays.³ Dealing with these government capacity and efficiency issues will likely continue to take much of the government's time for the foreseeable future.

While India had interacted with its neighbors since the days of the Silk Road, after its independence from British colonial rule, its focus turned inwards. Raja Mohan, a leading scholar of Indian politics, concludes, "India's insular socialist policies resulted not just in India's relative economic decline, but also saw the erosion of historic trade links with the neighboring regions in Asia. With no economic basis, India's relations with all the major powers, including the United States, Europe, Japan, and China remained underdeveloped."⁴ In the 1980s, India began a policy of "Look East," which sought to build ties with Southeast Asia. It was also a way to begin political and economic outreach to countries that were relatively receptive to forging new links with New Delhi. This trend persists, and now India is a member of the Association of Southeast Asian States (ASEAN) and a participant in the East Asia Summit (EAS) process.⁵

Because the Indian government does not publish strategic documents comparable to Washington, it is not entirely clear where New Delhi sees India's future interests or how or if it plans to continue to engage the world. What is certain is that India is broadening

³ Brian K. Hedrick, "India's Strategic Defense Transformation: Expanding Global Relationships" (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2009), 40.

⁴ C. Raja Mohan, "India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008*, edited by Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008), 44.

⁵ The EAS is a multilateral forum for discussing strategic, political, and economic issues affecting the region. The EAS first convened in 2005 and its meetings are generally linked to ASEAN meetings.

its aperture but wants to be engaged on its own terms. Mohan contends that India largely sees the world geographically and envisions its strategic interests radiating out in three concentric circles that encompass the subcontinent, greater Asia, and the rest of the world.⁶ This kind of framework may lend insight into India's immediate priorities and helps to explain New Delhi's growing web of partnerships.

India lives with a legacy of non-alignment and should not be viewed as strongly aligned with either the West or with Asia, though it is conceivable New Delhi could drift farther away from this in the future.⁷ New Delhi is unlikely to build binding alliances any time soon, but is deeply interested in expanding its network of relationships in a way that does not alienate any country by engaging another. During a trip to China in 2008, Prime Minister Singh explained, "The primary task of our foreign policy is to create an external environment that is conducive for our rapid development. Our policy seeks to widen our development choices and give us strategic autonomy in the world. The independence of our foreign policy enables us to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation with all major countries of the world."⁸ Thus, India appears to want to maintain as much strategic flexibility as possible while it continues development. In addition, Prime Minister Singh's language is not indicative of a move to spread the Indian idea of economics or governance, but rather a country looking for a range of diverse partners.

Only in the past decade has New Delhi begun to solidify many of its most important bilateral relationships, and it still seeks to define its international role. India has made a

⁶ C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (Jul/Aug 2006): 17.

⁷ Nehru conceptualized the Non-Aligned Movement as a way to give India, as part of a group of developing nations, the option to remain outside the orbit of either the Soviet Union or the United States during the Cold War.

⁸ Mohan, "India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security," 54.

concerted effort to strengthen relations in East and Southeast Asia through political and economic means.⁹ Along with engaging the United States, India is pursuing increased interaction at all levels of its strategic interests. The United States should understand that it is just one (albeit an important one) of many new or reinvigorated Indian partnerships.

India-Russia Relations

Rajiv Sikri, former Secretary of India's Ministry of External Affairs, highlights India's long-standing mistrust of the United States. He believes the United States fundamentally misunderstands India's strategic viewpoint and foreign relationships and warns against trying to pry India away from regional partnerships. With regard to Russia, he explains, "The unabashed U.S. attempts to reduce India's military dependence on Russia threatens to undermine Indian-Russian relations, and the Indian political class is not yet ready to strengthen ties with the United States at the cost of its friendship with Russia."¹⁰ While Sikri uses the word "yet," the reality is that India may never agree to "choose" between strategic partners. Indeed, with the high expectations in areas such as human rights, promotion of democracy and support of U.S.-led international endeavors, it is a possibility that India ultimately may not favor a close, enduring partnership with the United States at the expense of its other important relationships.

Russia, and the Soviet Union before it, has a long history of assisting India, including providing industrial expertise along with military equipment sales. Despite New Delhi's

⁹ House Foreign Affairs Committee, *Building a Strategic Partnership: U.S.-India Relations in the Wake of Mumbai*, 111th Cong., 1st sess., 2009.

¹⁰ Rajiv Sikri, "Misunderstanding India," *Foreign Affairs* 87, no. 2 (Mar/Apr 2008): 179.

official non-aligned stance, Soviet-Indian ties often proved problematic for Washington during the Cold War as the United States and the Soviet Union competed for influence with the Non-Aligned Movement. Furthermore, in 1993 the new Russian Federation and India signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation and in 2000 implemented a Declaration on Strategic Partnership.¹¹ This declaration was touted as demonstrating the convergence of the “long-term national and geopolitical interests” of both sides and was accompanied by eleven bilateral agreements.¹²

The diplomatic language of the India-Russia partnership is interesting, and offers several stark contrasts with the U.S.-India dialogue. For example, on the heels of a joint statement from Washington and New Delhi outlining a series of cooperation measures, in December 2009 Moscow and New Delhi released the “Joint Declaration between the Republic of India and the Russian Federation on Deepening the Strategic Partnership to meet Global Challenges.” The Russia-India statement touts longstanding Indo-Russian relations and references a deepening relationship. Furthermore, the statement asserts that

India and Russia share the view that radical changes taking place in the international system, do not just pose new challenges and threats, but also provide opportunities to build a new, democratic and fair multipolar world order-based on collective approaches, supremacy of international law, and adherence to the goals and principles enshrined in the UN Charter.¹³

The tone of this statement differs from those released with Washington in that it explicitly mentions multipolarity, focuses on global collectivism, and points to United Nations as a higher authority. Thus, the India-Russia relationship does not mention U.S.

¹¹ Sergei Lavrov, “Russia and India: Mutually Beneficial Cooperation and Strategic Partnership,” *International Affairs* 53, no. 3 (2007), 24-26.

¹² Press Trust of India, “India, Russia embark on historic strategic partnership,” October 4, 2000, <http://www.indianexpress.com/ie/daily/20001004/ina04015.html> (accessed May 26, 2010).

¹³ Government of India, Office of the Prime Minister of India, “Joint Declaration between the Republic of India and Russian Federation on Deepening the Strategic Partnership to meet Global Challenges,” (Moscow, Russia, December 7, 2009) <http://pmindia.nic.in/lprel.asp?id=1043> (accessed March 18, 2010).

dominance as the sole superpower, which has been a long-standing theme of post-Cold War Russian foreign policy. The statement furthermore appears to position India in potential opposition to U.S. long-term strategic goals.

India-China Relations

India's relationship with China is becoming increasingly important, despite the deep-seated mistrust that has existed between the two countries. China and India have a turbulent history, including a 1962 border war and continuing border disputes.¹⁴ Although it seems highly unlikely that the United States will be able to contain China, it may believe that deepening ties with India will set more favorable conditions in Asia. While some observers have cited Washington's courtship of New Delhi as a ploy to contain Beijing, it seems unlikely that India is willing to participate in such a role. Certainly India continues to worry about China's attempt to build relationships in Southeast Asia. These countries hold important security and economic significance by virtue of their geography and developing status and include Singapore, the Philippines, and Thailand. As Dan Blumenthal points out, "India is wary of China's strategic intentions, its support for Pakistan, its moves into South Asia, and its increasing presence in the Indian Ocean and relations with countries that sit at critical junctures along the Ocean."¹⁵

¹⁴ The Sino-Indian War in 1962 was precipitated predominately by border disputes, though Chinese animosity was amplified by India's decision to grant the Dalai Lama asylum following the 1959 uprising in Tibet. India was unprepared for the attack and China declared victory, though world opinion largely condemned Beijing's aggression. The border changed little as a result of the conflict.

¹⁵ Dan Blumenthal, "Will India Be a Better Strategic Partner than China?," in *Gauging U.S.-Indian Strategic Cooperation*, ed. Henry Sokolski (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 348.

Despite these mutual concerns, New Delhi and Beijing appear to be improving aspects of their relationship. Interestingly, India views China as not only a strategic threat and competitor, but also as an economic and security partner.¹⁶ While China is widely believed to be several decades ahead of India in terms of economic development, there are similarities in their situations. Both countries are developing at astonishing rates, but have highly unequal distribution of wealth.¹⁷ Moreover, the two countries share internal threats from separatist movements and terrorism, while simultaneously planning for a range of externally focused military scenarios (including planning for nuclear or conventional war to counter a threat from the other).

New Delhi recognizes that it must live and work in the same region as China. In 2005, New Delhi and Beijing signed eleven new agreements to begin a “strategic partnership” that includes defense links and expanded economic relations.¹⁸ It is unclear at this point how far each side will take the relationship. While there still may be little natural affinity between India and China, perhaps with the exception of memory of the ancient Silk Road trade routes, the two countries may find just enough in common to deepen their relationship and find mutual benefits as partners even as they continue to be a source of danger to the other.

China is embarked on an ambitious military modernization program, and while India has made moves towards upgrades, its efforts are inefficient due to systematic

¹⁶ Reuters, “China bigger threat than Pakistan, says IAF chief,” *The Times of India*, May 24, 2009 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/India/China-bigger-threat-than-Pakistan-says-IAF-chief/articleshow/4571491.cms> (accessed April 5, 2010).

¹⁷ BBC News, “India Rising,” January 22, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/6257057.stm (accessed April 1, 2010).

¹⁸ Xinhua, “China, India voice commitment to step up partnership, October 26, 2007, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-10/26/content_6955213.htm (accessed April 2, 2010).

procurement and integration issues. Bureaucratic delays have caused contracts for new equipment not to be awarded or to be cancelled, sometimes despite available funding. Perhaps half of India's equipment is outdated, though in the next few years the Indians expect delivery of high-profile systems such as submarines and an aircraft carrier.¹⁹ Like China, India has placed particular interest in air and naval assets, potentially sparking regional competition as each builds power projection capabilities. The United States seeks to maintain a prominent role and a balance of power in Asia, which could become more difficult as New Delhi and Beijing modernize their forces and increasingly come into contact in the air and at sea and begin to interfere with the U.S. monopoly of access to strategic lines of communication in Asia. A regional arms race is also not out of the question as both economies generate revenue that supports significant yearly increases in defense expenditures.

The United States should carefully mind India-China relations and watch for cooperation on issues such as energy security, as they could create synergies that could undermine U.S. bilateral efforts with each country. Additionally, the India-China relationship may test the strength of Indian resolve on promoting democracy. However, the United States should understand India's imperative to build political and economic linkages within its region and be aware that these regional relationships are important to New Delhi as a reflection of its relative status in the international system.

For its part, Beijing will watch closely the unfolding U.S.-India relationship and be especially sensitive to military cooperation or sales that compete with China's military

¹⁹ James Rupert, "India's Stalled Arms Buying Leaves it Army Outgunned by China," Bloomberg, March 12, 2010, <http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601089&sid=a5J1YwKljo3k> (accessed March 13, 2010).

modernization program.²⁰ Because it views itself as a Pacific nation, with broad interests in the Asia-Pacific region, the United States will require a careful balancing of its relations with both New Delhi and Beijing.

India-Iran Relations

The United States and India have historically not shared the same view of India's neighbor, Iran. As Alan Kronstadt of the Congressional Research Service explains, "India has never shared U.S. assessments of Iran as an aggressive regional power. India-Iran relations have traditionally been positive."²¹ Kronstadt notes that the two countries perceive civilizational ties.²² India's dependence on Iran for energy, which constitutes a large part of trade between the two countries, plays a substantial part in the relationship. Indeed, India and Iran have been discussing building an oil pipeline, though no agreement has been reached to date, and U.S. and international criticism of Iran's nuclear pursuits has had a negative effect on India-Iran relations.²³

New Delhi has generally supported Iran's peaceful use of nuclear power, but also criticizes in international forums Tehran's military nuclear projects and non-compliance with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) standards. India will continue to field questions about its own compliance with international nuclear norms, sometimes from

²⁰ Lisa Curtis, "U.S.-India Relations: The China Factor," in *Backgrounder* published by the Heritage Foundation, no. 2209 (November 25, 2009): 6.

²¹ K. Alan Kronstadt and Kenneth Katzman, "India-Iran Relations and U.S. Interests" (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006), 1.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Ariel Farrell-Wellman, "India-Iran Foreign Relations," American Enterprise Institute Iran Tracker, February 15, 2010, <http://www.irantracker.org/foreign-relations/india-iran-foreign-relations> (accessed March 1, 2010).

Tehran. India will invariably answer such questions with its track record on reliability in nonproliferation and the landmark agreement brokered with the United States that further clarified its nuclear status and placed most of its nuclear facilities under IAEA safeguards.

India-Central Asia Relations

Although New Delhi continues to “Look East,” it is also looking north, towards Central Asia, as a component of its regional foreign policy. In part, this is due to interest and concern over Central Asia being a transit corridor that both enables commerce and produces threats to stability and security by facilitating drug flows and terrorist activities. In addition, India perceives that a presence in Central Asia allows it to vie for influence and energy resources with Russia, China, and Pakistan.²⁴ Evidencing this, India has joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) as an observer, bringing it closer on security matters to China, Russia, and Central Asia under a rubric that does not shy away from potentially heavy-handed tactics against terrorists, extremists, and insurgents. While the SCO does not currently provide a framework that facilitates an alliance-type arrangement, the United States should closely monitor the progression of the SCO to understand how membership shapes the way U.S. partner countries, including India, think about Asian security. India’s activities as a member of the SCO may also provide some indications of its long-term strategic goals, which may not be complimentary to U.S. regional interests.

²⁴ Stephen Blank, “India’s Rising Profile in Central Asia,” *Comparative Strategy* 22, no. 2 (2003): 142.

India-Pakistan Relations

While India is reaching out and building partnerships throughout greater Asia, it retains fundamental interests with regard to Pakistan. Visceral distrust and suspicion between India and Pakistan is not likely to dissipate anytime soon, though both sides have lately appeared more willing to talk, at least superficially. A conflict between India and Pakistan is particularly frightening to the international community due to the potential catastrophic impact of the use of nuclear weapons. Historically, Pakistan has received support from the United States and China, which has caused the Indians much concern. Now, though, it is clear that India and Pakistan have diverged in terms of economic and political development, with India attaining a marked economic advantage and a more stable government. Nevertheless, the United States will still have to consider the impact of its relations with both sides when considering how to move engagement with India forward.

Implications of India's Foreign Policy Choices

One factor influencing U.S. interests in a powerful India is some American scholars' contention that the U.S.-India relationship will prolong the superpower status of the United States. Ashley Tellis, a noted scholar and former policy advisor, explains that, "For the United States, the ultimate value of the U.S.-Indian relationship is that it helps preserve American primacy and the exercise thereof by constructing a partnership that

aids in the preservation of the balance of power in Asia.”²⁵ This line of reasoning may, in fact, cast New Delhi as closer to U.S. thinking that it really is, while glossing over the regional political realities that India must confront. Tellis goes on to assert that, “Indian policymakers astutely recognize that only protective benefits accrue to New Delhi from American primacy, despite their own formal – but not substantive – discomfort with such a concept.”²⁶ Even if such a statement is true, it may have a limited shelf life. Dan Blumenthal counters Tellis’ approach by observing that, “Though it [India] will not likely challenge U.S. hegemony in Asia in the short term, neither will it necessarily accept a hegemonic America in perpetuity.”²⁷

U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer Lieutenant Colonel Brian Hedrick makes some key observations of India’s defense relationships that apply more broadly to Indian foreign policy. He notes that India now seeks to engage with many foreign militaries and has not sufficiently modified or enlarged its defense policy establishment to facilitate effective communication and decisionmaking mechanisms. Additionally, the Indian Ministry of Defense has little ability to make policy decisions on its own.²⁸ He writes, “Instead of avoiding alignments all together, India is now seeking to align with (just about) everyone, or become ‘poly aligned.’”²⁹

On defense and political matters more broadly, the United States and India will continue to encounter obstacles to efficient collaboration, including organizational

²⁵ Ashley J. Tellis, “What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?,” in *Gauging U.S.-Indian Strategic Cooperation*, ed. Henry Sokolski (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 244.

²⁶ Tellis, “What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?,” 244.

²⁷ Blumenthal, “Will India Be a Better Strategic Partner than China?,” 329.

²⁸ Hedrick, 39.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

differences. The United States is accustomed to working with a broad range of international actors, and has policy planning and execution mechanisms in various department and sub-department components along with delegated control over the associated processes. On the Indian side there are often no counterparts to these organizations, which impedes the speed and volume of engagement. John Gill, a historian and U.S. military academic, notes, “Among other things, this means that Americans have to calculate how much cooperation the Indian structure can manage at one time, and that excellent short-notice opportunities can be lost because the Indian side is not staffed to cope with manifold activities without extended lead time.”³⁰

Over time India will most likely become more adept at developing a more efficient and effective bilateral and multilateral relations. This will, however, require structural and procedural changes within the Indian government that will not be easy to achieve. As New Delhi develops a better sense of the role it seeks in international affairs over time it potentially will be in the position to determine the direction of global affairs. In order for this outcome to be beneficial for its strategic interests, the United States will have to continue to navigate Indian realities and uncertainties in the short to mid-term, and continue to assess and modify U.S. strategy in the future.

Yet, India is still a regional power, with deep economic, political, and military concerns generated by borders with an array of vastly different states. Washington must appreciate India’s worldview and expect that while New Delhi is interested in building a

³⁰ John H. Gill, “US-India Military-to-Military Interaction: In the context of the larger relationship,” in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation into the 21st Century: More than words*, ed. Sumit Ganguly, Brian Shoup, and Andrew Scobell (New York: Routledge, 2006), 122.

partnership with Washington, it also faces political realities domestically and in the Asia region that will force it to interact and cooperate with its neighbors. Additionally, the United States should not view India's rise as somehow predestined or automatic within a given time period. Indeed, New Delhi faces major challenges that may not enable India to be the major power Washington envisions in the near term.

Ashley Tellis believes that "both the U.S. and India want to prevent Asia from being dominated by any single power that could crowd out others and threaten American presence, alliance, and ties."¹ Amit Gupta, an academic focusing on Asian security issues, explains, "India has sought to participate in maintaining the status quo in the international system while incrementally reshaping it so that New Delhi gets a greater say in world affairs. But India's long-term objective remains to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council."² India has stated its desire to gain a larger voice in world affairs, most notably through the United Nations Security Council. Washington has been receptive to a Security Council reform proposal that would incorporate new permanent members. Although some American and Indian scholars see many immediate strategic linkages, the achievement of these linkages is likely decades away. Yet because of their broad impact, they should resonate prominently in Washington's long-term India strategy. The United States must recognize India's goals and objectives are of shorter range right now than those of the United States. Overarching balance of power and security issues will likely drive the government interactions of both the United States and India and will most likely form the basis of state-to-state cooperation agreements.

¹ Tellis, "What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?," 242.

² Amit Gupta, "The Reformist State: The Indian Security Dilemma," in *Strategic Stability in Asia*, edited by Amit Gupta (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 107.

CHAPTER 2

Foundations of U.S. Policy and Relationship with India

Although the United States and India have embarked on a new phase of their relationship it took a long time to develop and will be a challenge to maintain. Until the past decade, relations with India were not very strong partly because of U.S. disapproval of India's behavior during the Cold War, but largely due to New Delhi's reluctance to accept international nuclear norms. The Bush administration, however, desired to transform the relationship, based on a set of assumptions that continue to influence U.S.-India policy.

History of U.S.-India Relations

In the period after World War II, relations between Washington and New Delhi started out on awkward footing. The United States, wanting to remain a staunch supporter of its British ally, was not initially in favor of Indian independence.¹ After the partition of the British colony into two successor states, India's rivalry with newly-formed Pakistan was already shaping regional dynamics. India consistently felt threatened by U.S. and western support for Pakistan, especially when Pakistan joined the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization and the Central Treaty Organization in 1955. In response, India helped to organize the Non-Aligned Movement, which included

¹ Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67.

similarly-minded third world countries.² Scholars Baldev Nayar and T.V. Paul in their work on India's political power and place in the international system, note that,

During much of the Cold War era, India was a forceful leader of the developing states and represented their views through the Group of 77 [a loose coalition of third world countries within the United Nations] and the nonaligned movement. In that role, India mobilized the developing world and provided a certain amount of bargaining power to the lower-ranking members of the international system.³

More accurately, however, India's worldview and influence was fairly narrow, with much of its concern focused on perceived threats from Pakistan. In the course of being non-aligned, India refused to oppose communism actively and as a result often found itself closer to the Soviet Union.

Pakistan, however, looked to the United States for support and backing. The United States and Pakistan initiated a military agreement in 1964 that moved India closer to the Soviet Union as it sought security assistance. Nayar and Paul noted that, "[U.S.] military aid to Pakistan made that country technologically superior to India in military equipment. That aid also set in motion a process of reorientation of India's foreign policy in the direction of cultivating the Soviet Union, though initially only diplomatically rather than militarily, to counterbalance the alliance."⁴ In essence, this U.S. support for Pakistan put India and Pakistan on relatively equal footing in terms of regional political power despite India's greater size.⁵ The cost was India further distancing itself from the United States.

New Delhi's new-found affinity for Moscow increased as it looked for a source of military equipment, particularly after the United States placed an arms embargo on New

² Hedrick, 5.

³ Nayar and Paul, 12.

⁴ Ibid., 74.

⁵ Ibid., 68.

Delhi following the 1965 Indo-Pakistani war.⁶ India viewed this as unwarranted, since it believed Pakistan had initiated the attack. The United States would remain concerned about growing Indian military capabilities, especially in relation to those of Pakistan, and particularly after its nuclear test in 1974.⁷

Further widening the diplomatic gulf, the United States took a dramatic step to improve relations with China as a counterweight to the Soviet Union in 1972, which greatly irritated Indian public opinion. Starting in the late 1980s, however, U.S.-India relations began to thaw somewhat as Washington sought to drive a wedge between New Delhi and Moscow by offering dual-use technology in an effort to curb India's reliance on the Soviet Union.⁸ Ultimately, this approach was largely ineffective in that India came to view both the U.S. and Russia as unreliable technology transfer partners.

India continued to hold the United States at arm's length until the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The United States was now the sole superpower and India's policy of non-alignment had suddenly lost relevance. Shoup and Ganguly observed that not only did India lose "both its *raison d'être* and access to weaponry," Indian leaders were "faced with the consequences of half a century of gross economic mismanagement." They realized "that the country could no longer maintain a system predicated on import-substitution, licentious rent-seeking by bureaucrats, and a casual dismissal of the price of

⁶ The 1965 Indo-Pakistani War was an outgrowth of skirmishing in Kashmir, a disputed area, and New Delhi's perceptions that Pakistan was fomenting insurgency against Indian rule in that area. The conflict ended with a United Nations-mandated ceasefire. The war did not prove decisive for either side, though India was largely viewed as the stronger opponent.

⁷ Tellis, "What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?," 232-233.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 234.

mechanism.”⁹ The time and the political will to make all the ideological and structural changes dictated by the end of the Cold War would contribute to a lengthy and difficult process.

With the Soviet Union out of the picture, President Bill Clinton sought to repair relations with both non-aligned states and formerly pro-Soviet states. Strobe Talbott, Deputy Secretary of State in the Clinton administration, admitted that India did not get much attention until the end of Clinton’s tenure.¹⁰ Ashley Tellis provides a reason explaining that U.S.-Indian relations throughout Clinton’s presidency “were shadowed by new U.S. pressures on nonproliferation – arising entirely out of the U.S. conviction that capping, rolling back, and eventually eliminating India’s nuclear weapons program was critical to its larger global strategy of controlling the spread of nuclear weapons.”¹¹ India’s refusal to sign the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, which was extended in 1995, irked Washington particularly during a time when the Clinton administration sought to lead and solidify global nonproliferation enforcement.

Feeling increasing pressure from the international community to join the non-proliferation framework, which it saw as a potential threat to strategic flexibility and a limit on Indian nuclear ambitions, India withdrew from Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty negotiations.¹² The Bharatiya Janata Party led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee came to power in March 1998 and authorized nuclear testing. India conducted nuclear

⁹ Brian Shoup and Sumit Ganguly, “Introduction,” in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation: Into the 21st Century*, ed. Sumit Ganguly, Brian Shoup, and Andrew Scobell (New York: Routledge, 2006), 2.

¹⁰ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), 25.

¹¹ Tellis, “What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?,” 235.

¹² Michael Krepon, “Looking Back: The 1998 Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Tests,” Arms Control Association, May 2008 http://www.armscontrol.org/act/2008_05/lookingback (accessed March 28, 2010).

tests in May 1998, and everyone (including the Central Intelligence Agency) seemed to be caught off guard.¹³ While outside observers may have been fooled by India's efforts to mask test preparations, they should not have been entirely surprised by India's decision to test.

The United States reacted with strong rhetoric from the White House, recalled its ambassador, and prepared sanctions. Pakistan responded by conducting tests of its own fifteen days later. New Delhi's actions also curtailed tentative State Department plans to reengage India and improve bilateral relations based on White House guidance received a year earlier.¹⁴ President Clinton did not view India as a major power, but instead saw India as a potential economic force.

Washington and New Delhi held fourteen rounds of high-level talks from 1998 to 2000 as part of a U.S. effort to avoid regional nuclear competition.¹⁵ To some extent, the Indians appeared willing to prolong negotiations until the United States became eager to conclude dialogue and move on to other concerns.¹⁶ Improved relations and progress towards maintenance of a nuclear status quo were positive to the extent that President Clinton in 2000 became the first sitting president to visit India in twenty-two years. But, from Washington's perspective, relations remained hamstrung by the lingering issues concerning India's nuclear status and reluctance to join international nonproliferation

¹³ Ralph Begleiter, "CIA caught off guard on India nuclear test, May 12, 1998, <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9805/12/india.cia/index.html> (accessed March 28, 2010).

¹⁴ Strobe Talbott, "Dealing with the Bomb in South Asia," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no.2 (March/April 1999), 111.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Michael Krepon, "Looking Back: The 1998 Indian and Pakistani Nuclear Tests."

norms.¹⁷ Engagement focused on economic talks, often between representatives of the private sectors as well as ministerial-level talks concerning trade policy.¹⁸

President Bush's Breakthrough

Ultimately, the Clinton administration displayed a bifurcated approach to U.S.-India relations that did not set the stage for resolution of major bilateral disagreements. The administration expressed a desire to work with India on economic issues while attempting to take a hard-line stance on nonproliferation. In contrast, President-elect Bush's transition team had already begun to outline the beginnings of a strategy for engaging India.¹⁹ The president-elect had in mind a policy shift based on his perception of India as an important emerging power with a commitment to democratic values and similar strategic interests.²⁰

Condoleezza Rice, National Security Advisor and later Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative, and State Department Counselor Philip Zelikow were all supportive of a new start with India based on what they perceived as its potential geopolitical power, despite the fact that India had caused a rift with the United States by

¹⁷ Ashley J. Tellis, "India as a New Global Power: An Action Agenda for the United States," Carnegie Endowment Report, July 2005 <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=17079&prog=zgp&proj=zsa> (accessed October 15, 2009), 12.

¹⁸ Government of India, Embassy of India, "U.S.-India Trade Relations," <http://www.indianembassy.org/indusrel/trade.htm> (accessed March 10, 2010).

¹⁹ Future National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley apparently wrote an India strategy for Bush in 1999.

²⁰ Patrick Mendis and Leah Green, "U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement," in *Case Studies Volume I*, edited by Richard Weitz (Washington, D.C.: Project on National Security Reform, 2008), 198.

conducting the 1998 nuclear tests only months before.²¹ Unsatisfied with what it viewed as the Clinton administration's attempts to freeze out both India and Pakistan for non-cooperation, Bush's key advisors were predisposed to think about bringing India into the nonproliferation regime in the future by taking a more realist approach through power politics. In addition, the Bush administration was also rethinking U.S. participation in the existing nonproliferation regime, which posed a serious problem for interacting the way it wanted to with New Delhi.²²

U.S. Ambassador to India Robert Blackwill signaled President Bush's intent to dramatically alter the context and content of relations with India in a speech in Mumbai on 6 September 2001. He revealed that new policy approaches were being discussed in Washington and with New Delhi. The U.S. intent, he explained, was to transform the relationship and to approach it from a global perspective. The administration was signaling its desire to build cooperation with New Delhi based on its perception that India was emerging from a post-Cold War post-nonaligned status into a reengaged world power.²³ This fresh approach and fresh redefinition of India was in keeping with President Bush's stated conviction that the United States and India shared common democratic values and economic interests.

Following the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, New Delhi quickly expressed support for the United States and offered assistance, including use of military bases. While some of India's aid was politely refused because the United States preferred to

²¹ Mendis and Green, 206.

²² Mendis and Green, 194.

²³ Robert Blackwill, "The Future of U.S.-India Relations" (speech, New Delhi, September 6, 2001) <https://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/India/2001/India-010906-usia1.htm> (accessed March 18, 2010).

work more closely with Pakistan, India played a major role in U.S.-led counterterrorism efforts by protecting shipping in the Straits of Malacca.²⁴ The United States responded to India's show of solidarity by dropping all remaining Arms Control Export Act sanctions, reducing the number of companies and government agencies on the Entity List (those persons, institutions, or governments specified by the Commerce Department to whom certain items may not be transferred), and began to consider military interaction.²⁵ The atmosphere continued to change, but significant negotiation still needed to occur before a breakthrough was made in the relationship.²⁶

Richard Haas, who was the director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff in 2003, made a statement that illuminated the strategic ends and ways of the emerging U.S. India policy. "In order for the United States and India to attain the strategic partnership that is in our grasp," he said, "we need to deepen our economic relationship; we need to develop new habits of consultation and collaboration in our diplomatic relationship; and we will need to make our military relationship more robust."²⁷ This integrated three-part approach continued the thread begun in 1998 with the Bush campaign and shed light on Washington's true guiding principles in developing a new way forward with New Delhi.

Follow-on actions sought to use the three-part construct to address some of the most difficult issues in the bilateral relationship directly, including India's uncomfortable

²⁴ Breena E. Coates, "Modern India's Strategic Advantage to the United States: Her Twin Strengths in Himsa and Ahimsa," *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 2 (2008): 143.

²⁵ Mendis and Green, 201.

²⁶ Atomic Energy Act sanctions remained in effect because India did not agree to full-scope IAEA safeguards.

²⁷ Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "India and the United States: Forging a Security Partnership?," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005).

position as a nuclear power outside of U.S.-sanctioned nonproliferation norms. In January 2004, both sides introduced the “Next Steps in Strategic Partnership,” which was the name for an agreement continuing dialogue on civilian nuclear activities, high-technology trade, and civilian space programs.²⁸ In 2005, both sides agreed to a ten-year defense relationship called the “New Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship.”²⁹ Neither agreement advanced relations unilaterally, but rather created diplomatic, economic, and military operating environments in which the two sides could engage each other.

The most significant agreement reached under the new approach was the U.S.-India nuclear deal that sought to define India’s nuclear status more clearly as a pretext for moving forward both a comprehensive dialogue and a strategic partnership. The U.S. Congress cleared the way in 2006 for the United States to exempt India from portions of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 that prohibited transfer of nuclear material and technology to India because it had not signed the NPT. In 2007, the United States and India announced the signing of the 123 Agreement (referring to the relevant section in the Atomic Energy Act) concerning peaceful uses of nuclear energy. This agreement allowed the United States to supply India with nuclear materials that India would then place under safeguards, not use them for military purposes, and not transfer to unauthorized parties. The 123 Agreement required the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the

²⁸ Embassy of India, “Joint Press Statement: Next Steps in Strategic Partnership Between India and the United States,” September 17, 2004, http://www.indianembassy.org/press_release/2004/sep/17.htm (accessed April 4, 2010).

²⁹ The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, “U.S.-India Relationship: A Strategic Partnership” (September 26, 2008) <http://www.america.gov/st/texttrans-english/2008/September/20080926164714xjsnommis0.241482.html> (accessed February 18, 2010).

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to change their policies.³⁰ The IAEA quickly agreed to Indian safeguards and the Nuclear Suppliers Group granted New Delhi a waiver from the NPT.³¹ Despite some opposition in the Indian parliament, the 123 Agreement was operationalized in late 2008.

Under the nuclear deal, India separated its civilian and military nuclear programs, allowing the IAEA to inspect civilian sites. New Delhi pledged to continue a moratorium on nuclear weapons testing. As a result, U.S. companies are allowed to build nuclear reactors in India, and India is now eligible to receive nuclear technology from the United States. The deal clearly indicated the world community's trust that India would not engage in proliferation activities, and was based on a largely U.S. premise that it was better to have India's civilian nuclear materials under safeguards rather than have India continue to be outside of all parts of the international nonproliferation regime.

The nuclear deal's detractors have included Robert Gallucci, the Dean of Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service, and Henry Sokolski, executive director of the Nonproliferation Policy Education Center. These critics claim the deal undermines the international nonproliferation regime by rewriting the rules "midstream" by not requiring India to sign the NPT.³² The deal also fails to put previously produced nuclear materials and facilities under safeguards and does not cap India's production of fissile material or

³⁰ Kate Heinzelman, "Towards Common Interests and Responsibilities: The U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Deal and the International Nonproliferation Regime," *Yale Journal of Law* 33 (Summer 2008): 3.

³¹ The Nuclear Suppliers Group was founded in 1974 as a result of India's nuclear testing. This international organization seeks to control the transfer of nuclear-related material and monitor existing stocks of nuclear material.

³² Jayshree Bajoria and Esther Pan, "Backgrounder," Council on Foreign Affairs, Nov 20, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/publication/9663/> (accessed March 11, 2010).

nuclear weapons.³³ Detractors from the agreement have valid points, though it is difficult to underestimate the effect the agreement had on preparing the environment for further government-to-government and private sector initiatives. The intense negotiation and consultation needed during this process established strong channels of communication and cooperation between Washington and New Delhi that will serve both sides well in future dealings.³⁴

Unfortunately, the nuclear deal further illustrates India's unwillingness to join international norms, such as with the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and the NPT. It also demonstrates that while Washington and New Delhi agree on the outline of the non-proliferation regime, Washington was willing to make exceptions for India rather than successfully pushing New Delhi towards time-tested international norms. It is unclear what the long-term ramifications of the nuclear deal will be, whether it will adversely affect global nonproliferation efforts, or if the United States' move to make special accommodations for India will pay the long-term strategic dividends Washington expects. Overall, the Bush administration stretched further in its thinking than the Clinton administration and conceived of the positive possibilities a relationship with India might provide the United States. However, it may have gone too far, raising expectations to an unattainable level, and making too many concessions to a developing power without the capability – or perhaps intent – to reciprocate.

³³ Jayshree Bajoria and Esther Pan, *The Washington Post*, September 4, 2008 http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/04/AR2008090401614_2.html (accessed April 10, 2010).

³⁴ Evan A. Feigenbaum, "India's Rise, America's Interest: The Fate of the U.S.-Indian Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 79.

The July 2009 India-U.S. Joint Statement

While there was some speculation that India would fall off President Barack Obama's agenda, it does not initially appear that this has been the case. Moreover, the Obama administration does not appear to have changed course on U.S. India policy. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton bypassed New Delhi on her first tour of Asia in early 2009, but returned in July when the two countries could demonstrate progress by announcing additional areas of cooperation. The United States and India released an important joint statement on 20 July 2009 that redefines the way forward under the new U.S. administration. The agreement aimed at strengthening relations "while leveraging the strong foundation of economic and social linkages between our respective people, private sectors, and institutions."³⁵ The joint statement was a clear signal from both sides that the partnership would capitalize on momentum built under the Bush administration, and that the Obama administration was committed to improving relations. Furthermore, it does not indicate a reassessment of Bush-era policy choices. The statement lays out eleven key areas of interest, some of which are more detailed than others.³⁶

The joint statement confirms that both sides are interested in advancing common security interests, which are clearly focused on combating terrorism. Perhaps this is no surprise given the Obama administration's focus on, and full embrace of, the war in Afghanistan, which is within India's sphere of interest and influence. The statement also

³⁵ U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Public Affairs, Office of the Spokesman, "U.S.-India Joint Statement," (Washington, D.C., July 20, 2009) <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2009/july/126230.htm> (accessed January 14, 2009).

³⁶ Along with the joint statement, the "India-U.S. Strategic Dialogue" was established with five principal pillars and corresponding working groups focusing on Strategic Cooperation; Energy and Climate Change; Education and Development; Economics, Trade and Agriculture; and Science, Technology, Health and Innovation.

includes a commitment to adoption of a UN Comprehensive Convention against International Terrorism. Interestingly, while terrorism is often cast as a shared security concern, both sides have refrained from dealing in specifics. This indicates that each side may actually have a different approach to the issue, particularly as India resides in the neighborhood where many extremists are created, trained, and directed to execute attacks. While the United States perceives threats to its territory from international terrorism, some of which originates in South Asia, India is more direct in implicating Pakistan for its role in creating a terrorism threat. The Mumbai attacks are a clear indication that India has concerns about this ostensible U.S. ally in the War on Terrorism.

Announced alongside the joint statement was India's agreement to submit to end use monitoring of U.S. defense articles. This agreement seeks to guarantee that all military items purchased from the United States are used by their intended recipients for their intended purpose.³⁷ This understanding is crucial to Washington's justification for selling New Delhi advanced technology and weapons systems, and signals an intent to open the door to further defense cooperation and arms sales. Clearly delineated parameters on sales may bolster India's ability to view the United States as a reliable weapons supplier, though some may contend that end-use monitoring constitutes an unwarranted level of oversight and demonstrates a lack of trust.³⁸ A potential benefit for both sides could be significant U.S. weapons sales that would increase interoperability

³⁷ Press Trust of India, "India, US agree on end user monitoring pact," *The Times of India*, July 20, 2009 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-US-agree-on-end-user-monitoring-pact-/articleshow/4800054.cms> (accessed January 20, 2010).

³⁸ Major General Mrinal Suman, "End Use Monitoring Regime," *Indian Defense Review* 21, no. 1 (March 2008), <http://www.indiadefensereview.com/2008/03.edu-use-monitoring-regime.html> (accessed March 11, 2010).

and bolster Indian military modernization, while creating economic benefits for U.S. businesses and freezing the Russians out of the Indian arms market.

One of the emerging cornerstones of the Obama administration's security policy is a movement toward the elimination of nuclear weapons. The U.S.-India joint statement seeks to use the Conference on Disarmament as a mechanism to work towards a verifiable Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty.³⁹ While this is something the Obama administration may tout as a particular success due to the attention it has given disarmament, dialogue on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty is not new.

The 2009 joint statement reaffirms civilian nuclear cooperation. It states that both sides will "begin consultations on reprocessing arrangements and procedures" consistent with the 123 Agreement. The United States is also interested in making sure that it stands to benefit economically from civilian nuclear cooperation and several nuclear reactor projects have been specifically geared towards allowing opportunities for U.S. businesses.⁴⁰

As expectations for India's economic and political power rise, there will likely be increasing concerns about giving India representation in global institutions, many of which are heavily influenced by the United States. Additional Indian power will likely both be symbolized by, and accrue from, representation and participation in international organizations. This will certainly require a commitment of Indian resources commensurate with its growing stature. The joint statement asserts both nations have an

³⁹ The Conference on Disarmament is an international forum used to negotiate disarmament agreements. Though it is not officially a part of the United Nations, a United Nations representative serves as the group's secretary general.

⁴⁰ Pranab Dhal Samanta, "Gujarat, Andhra chosen as sites for US nuclear reactors," *Express India*, July 15, 2009 <http://www.expressindia.com/latest-news/Gujarat-Andhra-chosen-as-sites-for-US-nuclear-reactors/489412/> (accessed December 22, 2009).

“interest in exchanging views on new configurations of the UN Security Council, the G-8, and the G-20.” This is a rather vague statement of interest with no clear timeline, and Washington likely prefers it this way for the time being. While Indian and U.S. interests may align currently, Washington may not want to guarantee India broader access to international forums without some indication that India is capable of contributing. In the future, however, New Delhi could view this issue as a barometer for the relationship as well as Washington’s commitment to continue to integrate India into the upper tier of international decisionmaking.

Economic concerns cut across many of the designated areas of U.S.-India cooperation. The joint statement highlights both sides’ desire for “sustainable growth and development.” It also notes that negotiations will be ongoing for a Bilateral Investment Treaty. This kind of agreement would be geared towards providing protection for investors while opening doors to capital flows. Hopes on both sides for a treaty have been running high since at least 2008, but nothing has yet to materialize, illustrating that despite agreement on the premise of economic cooperation, finalizing agreements is a continuing challenge.

Additional areas in the joint statement include space, science, and technology and innovation, as well as high-technology cooperation. U.S.-Indian cooperation in the science and technology realm seeks to allow development and transfer of additional data and facilitate smooth economic interaction. The High Technology Cooperation Dialogue founded in 2002 will continue to bring together industry and government representatives. The group has built on the “Next Steps in Strategic Partnership,” reflecting a conceptual commitment to easing barriers to trade and making gains in the volume and speed of

approval of dual-use item transfers.⁴¹ At the time of the joint statement, both sides also concluded a Technology Safeguards Agreement. This agreement further clarifies the use of protected data of both countries and allows for launch of U.S.-licensed spacecraft components.⁴²

The Bush administration, along with its Indian counterparts, radically changed the nature of the U.S.-India relationship and overall environment in which U.S.-India dialogue takes place. The Obama administration has picked up where the Bush administration left off. As the 2009 joint statement shows, progress has been made on many fronts and in areas where the two countries had not cooperated in the past. But there are lingering issues for the two sides to address, some of which could present significant hurdles to a long-term partnership.

Continuing Issues in the U.S.-India Relationship

The United States and India have put some measures into place that facilitate dialogue on a variety of issues. Commons frameworks like the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership and the 2009 joint statement have allowed both sides to find common ground

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Industry and Security, “What is the HTCD?” http://www.bis.doc.gov/internationalprograms/htcw_archives.htm (accessed March 18, 2010).

⁴² The U.S.-India joint statement also mentioned additional areas of cooperation. It “affirmed the importance of expanding educational cooperation through exchanges and institutional collaboration.” This will likely be a major component of building people-to-people ties, which serve as another underpinning of the strategic relationship. Already, many Indian students are studying in the United States. Washington and New Delhi also initiated dialogue on energy security, the environment, and climate change. It appears that both sides are interested in cooperating on so-called “green” science and technology. The joint statement ended with mention of “global issues,” and little detail was provided to explain the depth or breath of this cooperation. One issue that was highlighted was the strengthening of democracy through the United Nations Democracy Fund. It is interesting that this issue, which was prominent in White House policy during the Bush years, was not given more prominence.

and build working relationships. A variety of issues will continue to be important to both sides, may touch on sensitive issues, and could ultimately shape each side's view of the overall relationship.

Energy, Nuclear, and Nonproliferation Issues

Energy, nuclear, and nonproliferation issues have figured heavily in the revitalization of relations between Washington and New Delhi and cut across the economic and political spectrums. Coming to an understanding of how both sides could move forward on these issues was key to establishing the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership and brokering the 2009 joint statement. The magnitude of the decision to try to come to consensus on these issues is revealed in part by the history behind India's civilian and military nuclear program.

While India was officially non-aligned during the Cold War, it maintained relations with the Soviet Union, complicating any possible reconciliation with the United States. Strobe Talbott contends that the Sino-Soviet split during the early 1960s, which resulted in a potentially hostile power on India's flank, had a decisive effect on New Delhi's decision to move forward with the development of nuclear weapons. After China tested a nuclear weapon of its own in 1964, India was left without a solid security guarantee from any of the major powers.⁴³ As a result, New Delhi conducted its own nuclear testing in 1974. Washington viewed both the tests, and India's pursuit of nuclear weapons, with particular consternation since at the time India was receiving large amounts of U.S. food

⁴³ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), 11.

aid. New Delhi's willingness to receive assistance from the West for basic sustenance while simultaneously (and perhaps unnecessarily) putting national resources towards nuclear armament indicated a policy far different than non-alignment. Moreover, India was dangerously close to upsetting the regional balance of power.⁴⁴

India began to focus on a missile program that would ensure delivery of its nuclear weapons following successful nuclear tests. India began its Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP) in 1983, which is overseen by the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL), and was an outgrowth of the Indian space program.⁴⁵ The IGMDP eventually led to testing in 2008 of the Agni-III, the latest in a series of nuclear-capable surface-to-surface missiles.⁴⁶

The 1998 Indian nuclear tests were met with stiff opposition from the United States. Washington moved to end all assistance to India with the exception of humanitarian aid, prohibit the export of certain defense and technology materials, and downgrade credit guarantees.⁴⁷ Following the tests, New Delhi announced its adoption of a No First Use policy and stated it would not use nuclear weapons against a non-nuclear state. Over the next few years, heightened tensions with Pakistan, that included the 1999 Kargil conflict in Kashmir, would push the Indians to think more about nuclear administration and

⁴⁴ U.S. State Department, "Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume E-8, Documents on South Asia, 1973-1976," <http://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76ve08/ch5> (accessed March 10, 2010).

⁴⁵ The DRDL designs and builds platforms for India's armed forces, though their systems are occasionally cited by the military as being unreliable. Due in part to the perceived inferiority of DRDL weapons systems, India's military often opts to purchase from abroad.

⁴⁶ Harsh Pant and Gopalaswamy Bharath, "India's Emerging Missile Capability: The Science and Politics of Agni-III," *Comparative Strategy* 27, no. 4. (2008): 376-380.

⁴⁷ Cable News Network, "U.S. Imposes Sanctions on India," May 13, 1998 <http://www.cnn.com/WORLD/asiapcf/9805/13/india.us/> (accessed January 20, 2010).

doctrine.⁴⁸

The United States was deeply concerned that India's move to develop nuclear weapons would serve as a model for other countries, thereby severely damaging the nonproliferation regime.⁴⁹ U.S.-India dialogue resumed, driven by Washington's effort to prevent further spread of nuclear weapons in the region and avoid an arms race between India and Pakistan. New Delhi's announcement of its No First Use policy was likely an attempt to show responsibility, but did little to mold Washington's view of India's potential to spark regional nuclear competition.

While the United States lifted most of its sanctions against India following India's outreach in the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 attacks, in 2001 it was unclear how the two sides might broach the nuclear issue. Washington did not formally recognize India as a nuclear weapons state. However, New Delhi was making a strong argument for increased civilian nuclear power and assistance in order to fuel its growing energy needs and economic expansion and sought to portray itself as a responsible nuclear power committed to nonproliferation. By 2002, India had further articulated its nuclear doctrine, which appeared to be conservative in nature. Harsh Pant, an Indian scholar, explains that, "Maximum restraint in the use of nuclear forces, absolute political control over decision making, and an effective interface between civilian and military leaders in the administration of its nuclear arsenal emerged as the basic tenets of India's nuclear

⁴⁸ From May until June 1999, fighting between India and Pakistan occurred in the Kargil district and in other locations along the Line of Control that separates the two countries in the Kashmir region. The conflict was set in motion by Pakistani incursions into the Indian side, which included Pakistani paramilitary forces. At the end of the conflict, Pakistani forces had withdrawn to the Line of Control. The conflict was viewed as particularly dangerous as both India and Pakistan possessed nuclear weapons.

⁴⁹ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), 4.

weapons policy.”⁵⁰ Ultimately, India agreed to separate its military and civilian programs and agreed to monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

U.S. policy planning revolved around a desire to change the nature of the U.S.-India relationship and the perceived benefits of bringing New Delhi under some form of nuclear monitoring, even if it did not mean convincing India to sign the NPT. Washington reasoned that India already had nuclear weapons and probably could not have been convinced to give them up as long as Pakistan also possessed similar capabilities. The United States wanted to move cooperation forward, and disagreement over India’s nuclear status was a major stumbling block. The full consequences of the nuclear deal, however, may not yet be known. Creating an exception from international nonproliferation standards potentially set a bad precedent, particularly as the international community deals with Iran’s nuclear program and other states remain undeclared bearers of nuclear weapons. Some observers even reason that India is too underdeveloped to need either nuclear weapons or nuclear fuel, making Washington’s change in policy not worth the cost it may entail in the future.⁵¹

Indian and U.S. companies are now able to cooperate on nuclear technologies, and U.S. companies have been tapped to build nuclear facilities in India.⁵² This partnership in the civilian nuclear market is expected to bring tangible economic benefits for each country. Strategically, the United States believes that New Delhi’s geostrategic power will grow along with its economic prowess, which is directly connected to its ability to

⁵⁰ Harsh Pant, “India’s Nuclear Doctrine and Command Structure: Implications for India and the World,” *Comparative Strategy* 24 (2005): 281.

⁵¹ George Perkovich, “A Realist’s Case for Conditioning U.S. Nuclear Cooperation,” in *Gauging U.S.-Indian Strategic Cooperation*, ed. Henry Sokolski (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2007), 222.

⁵² Samanta, “Gujarat, Andhra chosen as sites for US nuclear reactors.”

produce adequate power. The American calculus is that India should be able to bridge some of its shortfalls in energy production as a result of additional nuclear capacity, boosting its ability to fuel economic potential.

Common Values

Another foundation of U.S. policy and relationship with India is the assumption that the two countries share common values. Government officials and academics frequently tout this congruence in the U.S. and Indian perspectives.⁵³ These factors inform the ideological underpinning of U.S. engagement with India. It is unclear, though, to what degree these ideas might evolve over time. Neither Washington nor New Delhi was quick to speak about their common values and strategic alignment during the Cold War, implying these values are neither deeply rooted in history nor part of either side's national consciousness.

Shared Colonial Legacy

Superficially, India and the United States have a shared British colonial legacy and both have a loyalty to capitalism and democracy. But these similarities do not predetermine the course of the relationship. While both are former British colonies with

⁵³ Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "India and the United States: Forging a Security Partnership?," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005).

diverse populations, their colonial heritage and legacy is similar in name only.⁵⁴ English colonists formed the core of the United States, which recreated many aspects of their homeland. In the case of India, British colonial rule was imposed upon the native population. Englishmen were not colonists, rather they were administrators or part of the security of the Empire. Unlike the United States, which cultivated a unique identity in the 18th century, India was intentionally kept divided along ethnic and religious lines. India has a vast patchwork of peoples that have inhabited the same lands for thousands of years. Under the Mughals India always had interaction with its neighbors and viewed itself as part of greater Asia with independence, and with independence this ancient perspective reemerged. As such, India has come to expect regional interplay and recognizes the need to maintain relationships with countries it does not necessarily trust. The United States, on the other hand, has no imperial legacy and has developed without threats to its existence from its neighbors that shaped its worldview in a way for different from India.

Cultural Ties

Cultural ties between India and the United States are growing, particularly as more Indians chose to visit and live in the United States. Opportunities for Indians in the United States continue to increase, both in terms of temporary educational experiences and permanent settlement. Around 100,000 Indians now study in the United States each

⁵⁴ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 2004), 7.

year.⁵⁵ Indian-Americans number more than two million with education and income levels that well exceed the national level, and they are dispersed throughout the United States. Extensive lobbying in favor of the nuclear deal is evidence of the growing political power of Indian Americans.⁵⁶ An increasing affinity for Indian culture may be evidenced by the growing popularity of Indian music and Bollywood movies in the past few years.

Shared Democratic Values

Lisa Curtis, assessing the emerging U.S.-India relationship, noted that, “During the Bush administration... Washington developed a greater appreciation for the Indian democratic miracle and viewed our shared democratic principles as the bedrock for a broader strategic partnership.”⁵⁷ Though India and the United States find common ground in democracy, India is pursuing other relationships that are not based on a common framework of democratic principles and focus more on non-interference. While India is now more supportive of the promotion of democracy than it was during the Cold War, its policy on this issue continues to evolve. Jan Cartwright’s analysis of this issue makes the conclusion that, “India’s apparent increasing support for democracy is predicated more on ‘realist’ political concerns about the country’s strategic and economic interests, rather than an idealistic predisposition to supporting the spread of democracy as

⁵⁵ Chidanand Rajghatta, “Indian students in US cross 100,000 mark,” *The Times of India*, November 18, 2009 <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Indian-students-in-US-cross-100000-mark/articleshow/5240338.cms> (accessed March 20, 2009).

⁵⁶ K. Alan Kronstadt, “India-U.S. Relations,” (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, February 13, 2007), 5.

⁵⁷ House Foreign Affairs Committee.

a goal in and of itself.”⁵⁸ This approach is in contrast to U.S. faith in democracy that was central to U.S. foreign policy in the 20th century. It undoubtedly was the cornerstone of the Bush administration’s goal to actively promote democracy as a key national interest.

In July 2005, India made the founding contribution to the United Nations Democracy Fund, which is geared towards encouraging democratic principles. But in its dealings with other countries, New Delhi has largely fallen back on its non-aligned roots and through its foreign policy prefers not to intervene in the affairs of other countries, especially in the promotion of democracy. Cartwright asserts that, “India’s rhetoric in support of democracy on the international stage actually serves three concurrent purposes: to cement its ties to the world’s only superpower – the U.S. – in the short term; to enhance its status as a rising middle power in the medium term; and to pave the way for its possible role as a dominant world power in the long term.”⁵⁹ It remains to be seen how India will use its democratic principles in its relations with countries such as Iran, China, and Russia, with governments that are either not democratic or have an authoritarian bent. The United States could develop the impression over time that its expectations for New Delhi’s incorporation of democratic themes in foreign policy have not been met, and that India is serving its own interests without supporting broader U.S. goals.

⁵⁸ Jan Cartwright, “India’s Regional and International Support for Democracy: Rhetoric or Reality?,” *Asian Survey*, vol. 49, no. 3 (2009): 406.

⁵⁹ Cartwright, 423.

Economic and Technology Cooperation

A mutual desire for economic and technology cooperation is another underpinning of the U.S.-India relationship. New Delhi's role as a strategic partner of the United States will not come to pass without economic growth that marks it as a great power on the international stage. Indian leaders have identified many weaknesses in India's financial regulatory regime and economic system and are working to remedy these issues while facilitating increased inflows of direct foreign investment. "While India would like its brand name to be that of a hi-tech state," Amit Gupta writes, "the internal reality is somewhat different since both poverty and insurgent challenges to the state exist."⁶⁰ Dan Blumenthal, an American observer, agrees.

So far, Indian attempts to open its economy and take advantage of international capital and resources (like the Chinese have done) have been uneven. Nearly every expert group looking at India's economy calls for greater liberalization of the trade and investment regimes, investment in infrastructure, and rationalization of the regulatory climate...But unless Indian decisionmakers undertake massive economic reform, India's great power aspirations will not be met.⁶¹

For all of its economic inefficiencies, India is still developing rapidly according to global standards. This is indicated by growing linkages between the United States' and India's economy. Between 2004 and 2007, the Indian market for U.S. exports almost tripled.⁶² The Indian government claims that from 2007 to 2008, Indian investment in the United States created 65,000 U.S. jobs, which conflicts with the popular American

⁶⁰ Gupta, 110.

⁶¹ Blumenthal, "Will India Be a Better Strategic Partner than China?," 358.

⁶² Embassy of India, Washington, D.C., "India-U.S. Bilateral Relations"
<http://www.indianembassy.org/newsite/induspolAug07.asp> (accessed March 20, 2010).

idea that the United States is “losing jobs to India.”⁶³ In 2008, exports from India to the United States totaled 25.7 billion dollars, and with imports to India totaling 17.7 billion dollars.⁶⁴

India’s growing technical prowess also represents an opportunity for more open cooperation in the public and private sectors. Further development of “green” and space technologies could also be an area of focus for India and the United States. Dual-use technologies will remain sensitive, as any potential transfer of such technologies from the United States to India must serve Washington’s interests. Joint space initiatives could serve to reduce costs while leverage the expertise of both sides. Blumenthal contends, “Technology transfer should be done if it is in Washington’s interests, not as proof of Washington’s commitment to the overall relationship.”⁶⁵ This speaks to the inherent risk in technology transfer or cooperation, or encouraging deeper integration of the two economies.

To date, India and the United States have made only slow progress towards true economic cooperation despite general agreement on many economic principles. India’s financial regulations remain tight, effectively preventing many U.S. banks from opening in India.⁶⁶ Additionally, both sides continue to haggle over import/export issues and tariffs, evidencing that the two countries have some distance yet to go in moving toward a

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Nicholas Johnston and Roger Runningen, “Obama, Singh Promise Deeper U.S.-India Economic Cooperation,” Bloomberg, November 25, 2009 http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601091&sid=an_IH57yPeVE&refer=india (accessed April 1, 2010).

⁶⁵ Blumenthal, “Will India Be a Better Strategic Partner than China?,” 360.

⁶⁶ Heather Timmons, “Geithner in India for Economic Talks,” *New York Times*, April 6, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/07/business/global/07rupee.html?hpw> (accessed April 7, 2010).

true free trade regime.⁶⁷ Benefits must accrue to both sides if the U.S.-Indian partnership is to succeed. There are potential efficiencies and economic advantages to working together, as both sides enjoy certain comparative advantages, such as India's strength in the services sector. Indian leaders should expect, though, that such cooperation may at times stoke controversy with an American public concerned about U.S. jobs – especially those in the service sector – being moved abroad. As the world's largest economy and India's top trading partner, the United States is in a position to assist India on a number of fronts, including technology and financial expertise. On the other hand, India is in a position to help the United States with research and development and provision of low-cost services. A leap in substantive economic cooperation between the United States and India may not be easy to achieve, but would provide a more solid footing for relations by creating linkages each side will value and strive to protect.

Military Issues

Due to its traditional non-aligned status, India's contact with foreign militaries until the early 1990s was largely confined to defense procurement, primarily from the Soviet Union, and participation in United Nations peacekeeping missions. The first major breakthrough in U.S.-India military relations came in 1991 as part of the Clinton administration's outreach to former Soviet partners. The Commander of U.S. Army Pacific, Lieutenant General Claude M. Kicklighter, traveled to India to forge new defense ties, including exchanges and exercises. The result was the so-called Kicklighter Accord

⁶⁷ Timmons.

with the follow-on Agreed Minute on Defense relations in 1995, which reestablished defense contact at a time when India was still relatively isolated internationally. India's decision to test nuclear weapons in 1998, however, brought an immediate halt to U.S.-India military-to-military interaction.

The 1999 Kargil conflict in Jammu and Kashmir highlighted deficiencies in Indian weapons systems, prompting New Delhi to become further concerned about the reliability of military suppliers in case of conflict with Pakistan. India put renewed emphasis on upgrading its military, especially naval and air forces that could give India power projection capabilities. Additionally, India became more focused on conventional rather than nuclear forces as it sought to focus on limited war and broaden its military options. Consistent with this practice, New Delhi looked to Moscow (and continues to look to Moscow) for much of its defense procurement needs, which most recently included advanced fighters, an aircraft carrier, and modern main battle tanks.⁶⁸ But as India has begun to look increasingly outward, so has its defense establishment. Indeed, New Delhi is interested in expanding its defense supplier base, having made purchases from France, Israel, and the United States, and is looking now even farther afield for expertise.⁶⁹ India is also interested in furthering political ties through defense expenditure and gaining access to defense technology and know-how through defense agreements and weapons system purchases.⁷⁰ Hedrick explains that, “[India’s] procurement tenders place a lot of emphasis on technology transfer, licensed production, and reinvestment through defense

⁶⁸ Ria Novosti, “Russia and India sign major military, nuclear deals,” *Globalsecurity.org*, March 12, 2010 <http://www.globalsecurity.org/wmd/library/news/india/2010/india-100312-rianovosti01.htm> (accessed March 25, 2010).

⁶⁹ Hedrick, 11-13.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

offsets. These types of arrangements create more symbiotic relationships than simple purchases.”⁷¹ Despite an effort to reach out to new defense industry partners, however, Russia remains the first foreign visit of choice for new Indian defense ministers, and a large number of highly visible delegations continue to be exchanged along with periodic Russian weapons purchases.

Since the Bush administration’s decision to transform relations with India, military-to-military activities have been on the rise between the United States and India. For example, the Defense Policy Group steers dialogue between high-ranking government officials on defense issues. Moreover, since 2001, over fifty U.S.-India bilateral exercises have occurred. These have included numerous exercises involving air forces such as the prestigious Red Flag series in the United States and the Cope India series in India. Additionally, more fundamental agreements are aimed at increasing interoperability, such as the 2006 Logistics Support Agreement.

India and the United States also speak at length publicly about their common fight against terrorism and the cooperation they hope to build on this issue. As the United States continues its commitment in Afghanistan, Washington is looking more broadly at the South Asia region. The rubric of the day is no longer one of India-Pakistan or of Afghanistan alone, as evidenced by the U.S. State Department’s January 2010 “Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy.” Yet, India is just beginning to play a larger role in the U.S.’s strategy for the region in the Afghanistan context. Thus far, President Obama appears to be focusing on building capacity in Pakistan, commenting that, “Today, it is clearer than ever before that we must expand our

⁷¹ Ibid., 45.

relationship with Pakistan beyond security issues, and lead the international community in helping the Pakistani people overcome political, economic, and security challenges that threaten Pakistan's stability, and in turn undermine regional stability."⁷² However, any U.S. initiative that involves increased assistance to Pakistan will require dialogue between the United States and India to build understanding with New Delhi in order to prevent animosity or distrust given the perceived U.S. track record of assisting Pakistan at India's expense.

Thus, the Obama administration has been keen to highlight India's contributions to the Afghanistan effort. New Delhi, like Washington, would like to see a functioning, competent state in Afghanistan that does not threaten the region as a base for terrorists or ally of Pakistan against Indian interests. The administration appears to be casting India as an important power poised to bring positive outcomes to the region. Part of this attitude may be a result of the broader partnership, though Washington is also likely compensating for its increased cooperation with and funding for Pakistan. Given U.S. efforts to work with Pakistan on combating terrorism, which could ultimately prove useful for India as well, there is evidence of increasing U.S.-India dialogue on terrorism and regional security issues.

Although the United States and India both cite terrorism as a mutual concern, they have different perceptions of the issue and means to combat it. U.S. and Indian statements casting counterterrorism as a cornerstone of mutual understanding and cooperation may not be entirely accurate within the context of each side's experience and understanding of the threat posed by terrorism. Also, because the United States continues

⁷² U.S. Department of State, Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, "Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy" (Washington, D.C., January 2010) <http://www.State.gov/documents/organization/135728.pdf> (accessed January 25, 2009), 20.

to fight in Afghanistan, it has taken a greater interest in terrorist activities in Pakistan. While India also worries about threats originating in Pakistan, until recently it viewed U.S. cooperation with Pakistan as potentially running counter to its own counterterrorism strategy. Further contributing to the disconnect, the United States often overlooks the fact that India faces a sizeable internal threat posed by a Maoist insurgency. Better cooperation measures are needed to build mutual confidence, especially in the areas of homeland security matters to reduce what Lisa Curtis has described as “a lingering trust deficit [that] pervades the relationship and prevents deeper cooperation on specific regional threats.”⁷³

In the long-term, questions remain about the viability and conditions of U.S.-India defense cooperation. As India’s economic, political, and military power increases, it may seek a larger military role in the greater Asia region or even globally that may not comport with Washington’s plans. While India could follow China’s lead and become more active in traditional U.S. military operating areas at sea, a strong Indian defense could bode well for security in South Asia and beyond.

Despite more a more recent alignment of broad interests, U.S.-India relations have had a turbulent history. Over the past decade, the two governments have put in place mechanisms that have allowed bilateral dialogue to expand in scope and substance. Additionally, the nuclear deal removed barriers to cooperation. But while India and the United States have broad consensus on many issues, working out details has proven more difficult.

⁷³ House Foreign Affairs Committee.

CHAPTER 3

U.S. Policy Implications: Questioning Assumptions

The Bush administration pursued a strategic partnership with India based on the assumption that both countries share common interests, goals, and values. The Obama administration currently is continuing this partnership. Closer inspection of these assumptions reveals potential flaws that should lead the United States to reassess its expectations for a U.S.-India strategic partnership. Many of the major structural problems in the relationship, such as India's nuclear status, continue to be addressed. Dialogue, though confined largely to bilateral issues and currently without a global approach, is taking place on a wide array of issues from education and agriculture to defense and technology.¹ Concurrent with these historic breakthroughs, however, New Delhi is actively playing the field and forming other relationships across the globe as it begins to navigate its way from regional to global power. It is at this juncture that the United States needs to internalize expectations arising from its relationship with India, ensure that it has a firm understanding of the assumptions it has made and the risks inherent in the way the United States is pursuing the relationship, to ensure that the perceived benefits of this relationship supports long-term U.S. strategic aims.

¹ Evan A. Feigenbaum, "India's Rise, America's Interest: The Fate of the U.S.-Indian Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March/April 2010).

Asymmetry in Worldviews

India and the United States have developed in distinct ways owing to very different histories and regional experiences. This has led each country to have a unique worldview that takes into account the history and culture of the land and people that comprise the United States and India. Currently and for the foreseeable future, Washington and New Delhi will have fundamentally different levels of political power. As it moves to build a strategic partnership with India, the United States must understand the Indian worldview and the foreign policy choices New Delhi may make.

The United States should not attempt to view its relationship with India solely from an American perspective or even in a narrow regional context. India sees itself at the crossroads of greater Asia, a strategic hub of a complex region. Although the United States and India share common goals, India will likely act first and foremost in its own best interest. India is keenly aware of historic rivalries and lingering security issues in the region, but it also recognizes the need for broader cooperation, especially on economic matters. The U.S.-India potential partnership touches on issues that influence Russia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, East Asia, and beyond. As such, U.S. policies must be synchronized to deal with New Delhi, while balancing U.S. global interests. Yet, accomplishing this will be extremely difficult, requiring additional changes in the U.S.-India relationship, possibly requiring India to add additional policymaking capacity if it is sincere in accepting a strategic partnership with the United States.

India and the United States share certain common concerns, many of which arise from a shared desire to keep world markets secure. This shared goal creates

opportunities for interaction and cooperation in areas such as combating terrorism, securing sea lines of communication, fostering market-based reforms, and cultivating global institutions. However, the United States will increasingly have to understand India's strategic calculus. It must set realistic expectations to avoid disappointment as India seeks arrangements with other countries. This may mean accommodation and adjustment to balance competing and conflicting strategic interests in order not to derail accomplishment of the larger goals of the relationship. On this issue, noted scholars Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell have stated that, "For the U.S.-India partnership to develop further, the perceptions and expectations of one side cannot diverge too far from those of the other."² Should this divergence occur, either or both sides could chose to back away from the relationship despite alignment on several important strategic goals.

In New Delhi's view, the road towards great power status is through increased economic prosperity and a growing network of strong international partnerships. Acting on this view, India continues to enact substantial internal reforms in areas such as education, financial regulations, and infrastructure in order to boost its ability to attract foreign direct investment, and thus, its economic potential. This reform effort at times might have the effect of focusing New Delhi's attention away from external affairs as its foreign policy planning and decisionmaking is currently, and may remain, very limited in experience and capability.

Washington and New Delhi may not continue to see eye to eye on security concerns, and could even perceive a divergence in their common security interests. This could be rooted in the perception that the U.S. homeland is relatively insulated by geography and

² Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "India and the United States: Forging a Security Partnership?," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 3.

defined borders, whereas India faces internal threats internally and from close neighbors. The divergence in interests could also be the result of New Delhi's preference to use new or existing Asia-based frameworks that exclude the United States. For example, India could move closer to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, emphasizing stability at the expense of government transparency and social freedoms. Or, India could seek greater a military assertiveness that is at odds with the U.S. presence in Asia and the Indian Ocean in particular. New Delhi has yet to offer a decisive vision that outlines its conceptualization of the place of a strong India in the international order. While Washington likely will seek to help shape the development of any such vision, unlike the United States, India's strategic goals (among other things), are far from fully developed. It is unlikely that India will seek to align itself solely with the West (meaning the United States) at the expense of Asia. These uncertainties are likely to place stress on the burgeoning relationship and could ultimately cause it to fade in importance. The United States must be prepared to deal with such an outcome by ensuring strategic flexibility and envisioning alternate policies.

Potentially Faulty Assumptions

Washington's decision to pursue a strategic partnership with New Delhi rests on potentially faulty assumptions. In particular, the U.S. approach assumes that India and the United States can forge a mutually beneficial economic relationship that will drive other forms of cooperation. In addition, Washington believes that India's future in the

international arena is linked to that of the United States. Finally, the United States is quick to point out the shared values of the two countries.

Assumption: Economics

Until the early 1990s, India's economy was still largely closed to outside watchers. A balance of payments crisis in 1991 led New Delhi to enact reforms, but issues remain that hinder India's competitive edge. Dan Blumenthal and Aaron Friedberg of the American Enterprise Institute note that, "As compared to China, India may actually have better prospects for sustaining high levels of long-term growth, thanks in part to its deeper political institutionalization, better-developed capital markets, high levels of indigenous innovation, and a more favorable demographic profile."³ This optimism is likely the foundation on which the United States builds its idea of economic cooperation with India. While Indian economic growth and partnership with the United States is not guaranteed, prospects are favorable for long-term Indian economic success.

While Washington and New Delhi view mutual economic benefits as key enablers of a broader strategic relationship, progress towards elimination of barriers to trade has been difficult and slow. The World Bank reports that, "Although India has steadily opened up its economy, its tariffs continue to be high when compared with other countries, and its

³ Dan Blumenthal and Aaron Friedberg, "An American Strategy for Asia," A Report of the Asia Strategy Working Group, American Enterprise Institute, January 2009 http://www.aei.org/docLib/20090106_AsiaStrategyReport.pdf (accessed March 30, 2010), 21.

investment norms are still restrictive. This leads some to see India as a ‘rapid globalizer’ while others still see it as a ‘highly protectionist’ economy.”⁴

In 2005, the U.S.-India Trade Policy Forum was established to open economic dialogue between Washington and New Delhi. The U.S. Trade Representative, who leads the group on the U.S. side, cites potential U.S.-Indian synergies and is focused on opportunities for the United States to assist India with infrastructure, the importance of intellectual property rights, and information technology. In an effort to deepen dialogue on potential mutual opportunities for business development and paths to better government regulations, India and the United States in March 2010 signed the “Framework for Cooperation on Trade and Investment.”⁵

Nicholas Burns, formerly Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs, contends that, “As the United States and India look ahead to a new kind of partnership, we in the U.S. government should not forget that the big breakthrough in U.S.-India relations was achieved originally by the private sector.”⁶ Indeed, private industry and people-to-people ties create many lasting ties, not solely the respective governments. But while Washington views increased economic engagement as a critical component to its overall India-engagement policy, progress in liberalizing the U.S.-India trade regime has been slow and difficult. This begs questions about the pace and potential volume of economic engagement and challenges the idea that India is already a state with whom the United

⁴ The World Bank, “India: Foreign Trade Policy,” <http://go.worldbank.org/RJEB2JGTC0> (accessed April 5, 2010).

⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, “U.S.-India Trade Relations,” March 18, 2010 <http://www.fas.usda.gov/itp/us-india.asp> (accessed April 10, 2010)

⁶ R. Nicholas Burns, “America’s Strategic Opportunity With India: The New U.S.-India Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 86, no. 6 (December 2007): 9.

States should interact with as a economic powerhouse. The McKinsey Global Institute estimates that India's Gross Domestic Product could increase five-fold by 2030, but current trends do not support sustainable growth and sustained massive infrastructure projects need to materialize soon to protect India's potential trajectory.⁷ Already water and natural resource availability is strained, and this will be exacerbated by additional growth. In short, India faces a series of challenges to economic development that could impact U.S. efforts to engage New Delhi as a mature economic power.

Assumption: Power Politics

Washington appears to believe that a strategic partnership with India will benefit both U.S. and India interests in the future, yet it appears India is decades away from widely being considered a strategically important state. The current massive imbalance in the relative power of Washington and New Delhi may persist many years to come, if not indefinitely. Thus, while the present is essential for laying the groundwork and creating lasting bonds between Washington and New Delhi, the relationship may not reach critical mass for several decades. At this point, India and China (and perhaps others) may have come so far as to mount ostensibly the first credible challenges to U.S. superpower status in the post-Cold War era. Washington should, then, consider the degree to which India will become a reliable international partner in supporting U.S. economic and political goals.

⁷ Richard Dobbs, "India's urban awakening: Building inclusive cities, sustaining economic growth," McKinsey Global Institute, April 2010 http://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/reports/freepass_pdfs/india_urbanization/MGI_india_urbanization_executive_summary.pdf (accessed 24 May 2010).

An assumption underlying the U.S. view of its relationship with India is that India is fundamentally predisposed to strategic partnership with the West, and the United States in particular, based on shared values and interests, such as promotion of democracy and capitalism and combating terrorism. Unfortunately, the seemingly monolithic nature of these ideals belies the divergent ways in which Indians view these issues, and the driving force of regional security concerns in the Indian calculus. Unlike the U.S. orientation as a superpower with global interests, India historically has focused regionally and eastward in its foreign engagements, and it perceives rising powers and threats from terrorists on its flanks and the consequent need to maintain strategic flexibility. Despite any lip service paid by India to “shared values” with the U.S., these values likely take a backseat to such practical regional concerns. Illustrating the divergence in views, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Evan Feigenbaum noted that, “Many Indians do not believe that their interests lie primarily with the world’s developed countries.”⁸ Furthermore, Southeast Asia scholar Devin Hagerty pinpoints this divergence when he said that, “While US officials tout the benefits of ‘our natural alliance as the world’s strongest and largest democracies,’ their rhetoric masks lingering differences in substance and outlook that have historically frayed ties between New Delhi and Washington.”⁹

Consequently, Washington should take a second look and understand India’s worldview and public opinion in an effort to uncover New Delhi’s future policy choices and potential to be aligned with U.S. interests in the long-term. Given their historic tendencies and practical regional focus, the Indians may be loathe to become oriented

⁸ Evan A. Feigenbaum, “India’s Rise, America’s Interest: The Fate of the U.S.-Indian Partnership,” *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March/April 2010): 83

⁹ Hagerty, 11

towards the United States or the West in general at the expense of building strong regional partnerships, which would also be based on common interests. This scenario would be in opposition to Ashley Tellis' conceptualization of India's future posture. He wrote that, "Aiding the preservation of the American-led global order, in contrast to, say, acquiescing to the rise of a Chinese alternative, is necessarily consistent with India's own vital national interests."¹⁰

India could find itself in the middle of a struggle between the existing "Washington Consensus" international system and some new model based on Beijing and Moscow's drive for prosperity and stability in a more authoritarian framework that challenges U.S. dominance. If this situation were to arise, despite Washington's assumptions to the contrary, New Delhi may just as likely hedge its bets and remain non-committal (or even move closer to perceived emerging power bases such as Beijing or Moscow) rather than fully embrace its shared democratic values with the West and the United States in particular. Washington's time and energy spent on relations with India, therefore, might not yield the benefits it expects while exacting a toll in terms of time and resources.

Assumption: Common Values

Perceived common values are the basis on which much of the U.S.-India dialogue occurs. On the surface, the two sides appear to share common interests, goals, and values, from regional stability to securing energy supplies, to furthering democracy.¹¹

¹⁰ Ashley J. Tellis, "Washington, New Delhi, Who Gets What?," *The Times of India*, January 30, 2010 <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/publications/index.cfm?fa=view&id=24792> (accessed April 10, 2010).

¹¹ Dan Blumenthal and Aaron Friedberg, "An American Strategy for Asia," 21-22.

But further reflection reveals cracks in alignment of U.S. and Indian common values. A shared colonial legacy influenced both sides in vastly different ways. Cultural ties are growing, mostly as a result of Indians settling in the United States, but U.S. connections to India remain limited. Both sides are democracies, but India shows little zeal for promoting the cause of democracy in its relationships as does the United States. If these values are the basis for a perceived strategic partnership, then Washington may have cause for worry. This situation should prompt Washington to examine closely the ties that might bind India and the United States in a strategic partnership and should ensure that they are strong enough to endure political disagreements.

The Need for Policy Review

During the years of the Bush administration, India policy was overseen and nurtured on a high-priority basis by senior, influential policymakers predisposed to support engagement.¹² Now, with a change in key personnel, the Obama administration should conduct a review of its India policy. If senior policymakers can no longer take, or do not desire to take, a deep personal interest in the relationship, then it should become further institutionalized so that less specific policy attention is needed. President Obama's first state dinner was held in honor of the Indian prime minister on the occasion of his visit to the United States in November of 2009. The U.S.-India relationship will likely need to receive a more realistic level of attention relative to other matters, especially as the Obama administration attempts to balance its focus on Pakistan and Afghanistan with its

¹² Mendis and Green.

desire to strengthen ties with India. This gives rise to the perception that the relationship has lost impetus, but the institutionalization of the U.S.-Indian relationship should be cast as a normalization of an important, long-term relationship, rather than a strategic imperative.

Over the past few years, interest in the U.S.-India relationship has been increasing within the U.S. government as well as in academic venues and think tanks. The Center for New American Security, which has several alumni in the Obama administration, has launched a year-long study of India-related issues.¹³ What this actually means for U.S. policy is unclear, but it is healthy that additional study and assessment is taking place. Overall, the amount of analysis being conducted in the U.S. government on India – at least openly – appears to be lacking. For example, there are no reoccurring reports to Congress regarding India specifically and few hearings are held in Congress on India relations (with the exception of the nonproliferation issue during the negotiation of the 2007 nuclear deal). Both the legislative and executive branches should ensure deep analysis of long-term issues affecting U.S.-India relations is being undertaken within intelligence and policy channels and is complemented by outside study.

Nevertheless, something is missing in terms of the overall impact of a new direction for the U.S.-India relationship. Media attention on the uninvited guests at the state dinner for Prime Minister Singh undoubtedly eliminated discussion of U.S.-India relations. There is far more buzz generated in Washington and in the media when leaders from Russia or China visit the United States. Blumenthal observes, “Consider this: when President Hu of China comes to town, at least five major U.S.-China organizations fall all

¹³ Center for New American Security, “CNAS Rolls Out Project on Future of U.S.-India Relationship,” January 21, 2010 <http://www.cnas.org/node/4005> (accessed January 25, 2010).

over themselves to see which one can lay out the longest red carpet. There is no analogue with India.”¹⁴ This indicates that the American public has little interest or knowledge of India or of its perceived importance to the United States.

The U.S. government needs to recognize that there is little national discourse regarding India. Because of the long-term nature of the commitment the United States is proposing in its approach to relations with India, efforts need to be made to pull the two governments and people closer together and in a more systematic way. It may be difficult to convince the American public that U.S. and Indian national interests align despite asymmetries, that enough common ground exists to build a relationship, or even to build a positive image of India in the public perception.

Within the executive branch of the U.S. government, management of U.S.-India issues is sometimes complicated by government organization. For example, in the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), India is situated in a seam between U.S. Pacific Command and U.S. Central Command, making it easy for military commanders and planners to overlook India. Similar divisions exist in the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy’s regionally-focused staff, while the military services and the Joint Staff have multiple offices that deal with issues such as cooperation and military sales. Extensive staff time will likely be needed to deconflict DoD agendas (not to mention interagency agendas) and ensure seamless execution within the DoD and the broader executive branch with respect to India issues. In addition, DoD should consider shifting

¹⁴ Dan Blumenthal, “Asia: Back to the Fundamentals,” *Foreign Policy* online, posted January 21, 2010, http://shadow.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2010/01/21/asia_back_to_the_fundamentals (accessed January 22, 2009).

responsibility for engaging India from U.S. Pacific Command to U.S. Central Command, which would better align it with Central and South Asia issues and create distance from engagement with China.

Despite the wide range of issues that the United States and India are now working on together, the U.S.-India relationship still is noticeably shallow and continues to be influenced by the legacy of the Cold War. Few mechanisms exist for the two governments to exchange sensitive information or engage in conversations about global dynamics. Other than mention of regional security, the potential for discussions about expanding the United Nations Security Council, and exchange in economic forums, the U.S.-India relationship remains highly bilateral. While Washington may assume that New Delhi sees unique advantages in working with the United States on issues such as energy, trade, and military modernization, Washington should recognize the fact that India has or is improving mechanisms to address these same issues with Russia and within the Asia region. This leads to a questioning of whether Washington perceives it needs New Delhi more than India thinks it needs the United States. Yet, India's quest for power within the international system inevitably leads it to be interested in a strong relationship with the only remaining superpower, for now, anyway.

Overall, there is a sound measure of logic in furthering Washington's support for New Delhi. Washington must also comprehend the risk associated with its chosen path, derived in part from differing current and future views of India's future roles, and take care to monitor it over time. The strategy will need to remain flexible to account for changes in India, the United States, and the greater international environment.

Implications for Broader U.S. Policy

Engagement with India faces a tough long-term reality and potentially some difficult choices for the United States. A healthy relationship with India is in the U.S. interest, though India may not ultimately be the strategic partner originally envisioned by the Bush administration. Different worldviews and resulting foreign policy options create many points of divergence. U.S. policy also must continue to balance long-term cooperation with China and Russia in the context of uncertain relations with India. Realistically, the United States should not depend solely on India in Asia, but work on cultivating other relationships as well. Policy planning should include additional options for policymakers grounded in scenarios that portray differing levels of Indian support, development, and power in the international system. Finally, the United States should be prepared to speak openly about its intentions in the greater Asia region as its relationship with India unfolds. This may become particularly relevant depending on regional views of New Delhi's strategic partnerships and overall foreign policy choices.

Examination of the U.S.-India relationship and the uncertain nature of the future raises complex strategic questions. The United States has become accustomed to thinking about itself as the only superpower, conceptualizing the globe with it as the center. This view can lead to a misunderstanding of the alignment of other countries and their natural affinities based on history, culture, and economic ties. It is unclear if the United States thinks adequately enough to be able to conceptualize a strategy for a possible future marked by multipolarity and the rise of competing worldviews. Indeed, Washington has not yet truly dealt with the legacy of the Cold War and its impact on

rising states that do not view themselves as tethered to any one major power. These questions should lead to some critical assessments of the U.S.-India relationship, but also how U.S. foreign policy objectives are developed in the long-term.

CONCLUSION

Cold War politics prompted newly independent India to adopt a policy of non-alignment, while pushing it towards the Soviet Union at the expense of relations with the West and the United States. In the post-Cold War period, India has become attuned again to building robust regional relationships. At the same time, and despite the checkered past, New Delhi has welcomed Washington's overtures and the two countries have embarked on a new relationship that each side is casting as a strategic partnership. But while India and the United States have moved their relationship forward significantly, more work is needed if the partnership is to become institutionalized. Some observers are calling the reinvigorated U.S.-India relationship President Bush's greatest foreign policy achievement; however, relations may never achieve the lofty ambitions developed in the late 1990s due to unrealistic expectations and a series of shaky assumptions.¹

Washington should conduct a complete review of its India policy in light of potential strategic asymmetries in future approach between India and the United States. While interests appear to align now, New Delhi has yet to present a concrete or reliable vision for its place in the international order. In the future, India may not see itself as closely aligned with the United States, and Washington may not reap the benefits it thinks it will accrue, including a prolonging of U.S. superpower status and India's support in an increasingly multipolar world. Washington's long-term foreign policy analysis and planning glosses over important economic, political, and cultural realities and creates unattainable expectations. Meanwhile, signs of asymmetry are already apparent in India

¹ Ashley J. Tellis, "What Should We Expect from India as a Strategic Partner?," 231.

and U.S. views of important issues such as security, and U.S. actions taken in the shorter term such transfer of dual-use technologies should give Washington pause.

Washington's approach to its relationship with India reflects a problematic policymaking trend. Too often the United States misunderstands the strategic viewpoints of other countries and fails to take a long enough view. Washington will need to adapt to new political realities that in some cases still reflect the Cold War legacy, and indeed, extend back to deep historical roots.

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