

"Investing in the Future of U.S.-India Defense Relations"
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Thank you all for coming, and especially to Jack Garrity for that kind introduction.

It is an honor to be here at the Asia Society, which for more than five decades has guided Americans toward a better understanding of the world's largest and most populous continent. Today that mission is more important than ever.

Standing at the vanguard of Asia's emergence is the country that I am here to speak about today. India is both an age-old civilization and a modern marvel—a land that for centuries captured the imagination of traders and travelers. One of our most famous writers and observers of the human condition, Mark Twain, recognized the grandeur of India when he observed, "So far as I am able to judge, nothing has been left undone, either by man or nature, to make India the most extraordinary country that the sun visits on his rounds. Nothing seems to have been forgotten, nothing overlooked."

Today, India boasts the world's second-fastest growing economy and one of its most innovative technology hubs. Its scientists and engineers are in demand across the globe. And its contributions to global culture—from Bollywood blockbusters to high literature—rival those of any nation.

Most importantly for my purposes, India is playing an increasingly important role in world affairs at a time when its relations with the United States have never been stronger.

I need not remind this audience that our nations were slower to come together as partners than might have been expected, given our many shared values and deep commitment to democracy. But American leaders have long recognized the potential for closer cooperation to enhance each country's security.

While Cold War politics made such cooperation impossible for decades, President Clinton's much-celebrated visit to India in 2000 launched a new era of cooperation. Since then: bilateral trade between our countries has tripled, we reached a landmark agreement on civil nuclear cooperation and our security relations were strengthened in the wake of terrorist attacks that devastated both of our nations.

The Obama Administration has worked tirelessly to enhance this relationship. It was no accident that President Obama hosted Prime Minister Singh and his wife at the first State Dinner, or that the President referred to our relationship with India that night as "one of the defining partnerships of the 21st Century." It was no accident that the National Security Strategy released this spring calls the relationship with India a top priority. And it is no accident that more than a third of the Cabinet, including my boss, Secretary Gates, visited India in the 18 months since the President took office.

Some critics in Washington and New Delhi have suggested the Obama Administration is not as committed to U.S.-India relations as its predecessors were. Other critics assert that this Administration sees India solely through the lens of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Still others think that the absence of high-profile, headline-grabbing deals and accomplishments over the last 18 months suggests that we don't view this relationship as important.

Such criticisms miss the mark completely. The U.S.-India relationship is not built on, and cannot be sustained on, grand gestures or brief moments of crisis, but on shared interests and values.

I look forward to making my first visit to India in the coming weeks, and can assure you that the Pentagon is committed to further strengthening these ties through the enhancement of our defense relationship. This bond is grounded in common democratic values and converging interests that make India and U.S. natural partners. The U.S. and India have an overarching shared interest in promoting global stability and security. Increasingly our specific security interests are converging. Let me give just three examples.

First, both the U.S. and Indian economies rely on effective maritime security to preserve free passage in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waterways. Sea lines of communication are fundamental to our continued prosperity, and we have a mutual interest in their security.

Second, both countries have an abiding interest in countering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Together, our efforts will help counter this threat to regional and global security.

Third, we are both committed to promoting global stability and security.

India's post-conflict capacity building efforts span the globe, and it remains one of staunchest supporters of United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Within South Asia, both of our nations are committed to the long-term stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. We know as the US mission in Afghanistan evolves, we must continue to provide robust support for Afghan stability, governance and development. India is playing a positive role in Afghanistan's economic and social development and we know that help will continue. We highly value India's role-- and the sacrifices Indian citizens have made-- in building economic and social opportunities in Afghanistan. We see India's continued involvement in Afghanistan's development as a key part of that country's future success.

Grounded in these shared interests, our defense relationship has grown substantially since we completed a defense framework agreement in 2005, outlining ten areas of cooperation, including maritime security, counter-proliferation, and peacekeeping operations. As participants noted during the recent Strategic Dialogue, our defense relations have evolved from solely military-to-military links into a more comprehensive relationship that encompasses dialogues, exercises, defense sales, and practical cooperation.

At the apex of the US/India defense relationship is the Defense Policy Group, which I look forward to co-chairing this fall. The DPG has been an excellent forum for planning our engagement, airing our concerns, and exchanging views on strategic issues. We also have dialogues that discuss our defense trade, service-to-service cooperation, technical cooperation, and a group dedicated to developing and ensuring procedures for keeping our technology secure.

The growth and comprehensiveness of this relationship is nothing short of remarkable. My Indian counterparts now tell me that their defense and security relations with the United States are as close as they are with any nation. Anyone who followed these issues during the Cold War knows well such ties once seemed impossible. Great credit must go to those who over the years have helped us get here, several of whom are here with us today.

Together, we in the Department of Defense and our Indian counterparts now face the challenge of sustaining and expanding upon these gains. In the past, we used to talk about how we could do more - more exercises, more high-level visits. Now, we face a task that is equally important and challenging -- creating the conditions where close US-India defense cooperation is normal, expected, and routine. Cementing a fully formed bilateral relationship requires more than formal visits and high-level dialogues-it's about day-in-day-out cooperation at all levels. Such interactions may not make as many headlines, but routine contacts are in many ways the most important bilateral business we conduct.

Take, for example our bilateral exercises. U.S.-India military exercises have grown in size, scope, and sophistication since 2005. We now have regular exercises across all services. And the complexity of these exercises is increasing as both militaries become more familiar with each others' methods of operation. We also look forward to more multilateral activity with India throughout Asia in order to build patterns of cooperation among regional militaries to respond to various crises such as the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. A prime example of such multilateral activity has been the Malabar naval exercises that have been conducted in the past with Japan and other countries and that we hope to build on in the future..

Another growth area is our burgeoning trade in defense equipment, including the Indian purchases of C-130J and P-8I aircraft. I am and will continue to be a strong advocate of U.S. solutions for India's defense needs. U.S. companies are eager to work with India as the Indian military continues its modernization. Today, two American companies are among the leading competitors for a \$10 billion sale of 126 advanced fighter aircraft to the Indian air force, currently the world's biggest defense tender. And we are also looking at future sales of the C-17 aircraft as another example of near term defense sales.

I want to underscore that we in the Department of Defense do not view defense sales as mere commercial transactions. We understand that India is making a strategic as well as an economic choice when it makes defense acquisitions. Obviously, the commercial benefits of defense sales to the U.S. economy can't be denied, but from a DoD perspective, these sales are most important to building a strategic partnership that will allow both our countries to cooperate more effectively in the future. Whether the scenario involves humanitarian assistance, counterterrorism cooperation, or maritime security activities, having common equipment will allow more seamless cooperation.

India is, of course, also seeking to build its own indigenous defense industry, and is looking for the best technologies to use in its defense sector. The U.S. is committed to providing India with top-of-the-line technology, and we have backed up our commitment by approving the overwhelming majority of licenses requested last year. Secretary Gates has made export control reform a key priority, and we see streamlining and modernizing our export control system as a national security issue, one that affects our ability to build effective partnerships.

Going forward, we see several promising opportunities to further develop our burgeoning defense ties.

We will continue to work with India on countering the spread of WMD through maritime cooperation, dialogue, and identifying new technologies to combat this threat.

We will continue to build on our experience working together on disaster assistance and humanitarian relief, and develop procedures to facilitate more seamless cooperation in future contingencies.

We will look at ways in which, together, we can better secure the global commons by expanding our already robust cooperation in air, space, cyberspace and maritime initiatives. And to counter the scourge of piracy, we will work to translate recent joint naval exercises into real world operations.

These proposed areas of cooperation highlight some of the most difficult security challenges facing both of our countries, and reinforce the need for us to work together as India builds its military capabilities. The United States also maintains a strong interest in India's emergence as a regional power in Asia. The Obama administration is committed to strengthening regional partnerships, to build an international system capable of addressing challenges that have no respect for borders. In Asia, this means it no longer makes sense to discuss this increasingly interconnected region in terms of "East Asian" security, or "South Asian" security.

It also means that the security of Asia's two dominant powers can no longer be viewed as a zero sum game. A safer, more secure India that is closer to the United States should not be seen a threat to China, and vice versa.

Indeed, all three countries play an important role in that region's stability. The United States recognizes and welcomes the growing cooperation between India and China on security affairs in recent years. And both India and the United States seek a closer relationship with China, while encouraging Beijing to be more transparent about its military capabilities and intentions.

I am aware that some observers believe that the United States sees India—indeed, all of South Asia—through the prism of our efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I am here to tell you that we see India as far more than a vital partner on these issues. It is also an indispensable partner in addressing all of the regional challenges we face. And in the coming years, I believe India will strengthen its role in the security of its region. We welcome this development because, for all of the reasons I have already mentioned, India's success is very much in America's national interest. But it is also because India has long been, and remains, a bellwether for the challenges and aspirations of a host of other nations inspired by its success.

As we move forward, we will continue to develop our defense relationship with India. It won't be always easy, and it won't always be glamorous. It will require much hard work and dialogue to promote a better understanding of each other's decision-making processes and ways of operating. However, as former President Clinton stated during his historic trip to India in March of 2000, ".we want India to be strong; to be secure; to be united; to be a force for a safer, more prosperous, more democratic world. Whatever we ask of you, we ask in that spirit alone.our task is to turn a common vision into common achievements so that partners in spirit can be partners in fact. We have already come a long way to this day of new beginnings, but we still have promises to keep, challenges to meet and hopes to redeem."

Of course, there will inevitably be moments in which we won't see eye to eye. But this is so in the strongest of relationships, and in the end, the test of a relationship isn't the absence of these

moments-it is the presence of mutual respect and a commitment to shared goals that can see the relationship through the ups and downs.

Let me end by saying that this is precisely why I have so much confidence in the future of our partnership with India. Our nations have so much in common, from our democratic values to our converging interests. So although I don't know exactly what the future will look like, I'm certain that our deepening partnership will help shape a future defined not by crisis, but by our shared vision of a stable and prosperous world.

Thank you very much.