

The Future of US-India Relations

Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill

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I appreciate those kind words of introduction. It is wonderful to be back again in Mother India with CII and so many friends here this afternoon. As I have said on many occasions, I had no better friend and guide when I was American Ambassador in India than Tarun Das. He did his best to prevent me from making mistakes while I was resident in Roosevelt House. Although Tarun did not succeed in every instance, he will always have my profound gratitude for his wise friendship and counsel, then and now. As always, thank you Tarun.

Before going further, I want to emphasize at the outset that my remarks here today represent my personal views and not those of the RAND Corporation where I now work in sunny Santa Monica California.

Someone once remarked that "History is interim reports issued periodically." I will seek to here today to issue such an interim report on US-India relations. However, I am also mindful of the Indian proverb that "empty vessels make more noise" so I ask your indulgences in nevertheless listening to what I have to say.

Let me begin by very briefly putting US-India relations in its geopolitical context. We are, of course, in the worst global recession since the 1930's. There is dangerous instability in many parts of the globe. And we are also facing the most perilous international security situation since before the 1973 Middle East war. Developments in the Greater Middle East are uniformly awful. Instability and violence is rising in Iraq as the United States begins to undertake its military withdrawal beginning with the major cities. Iran defiantly pursues its nuclear weapons program. Prospects for progress between Israel and the Palestinians are the grimmest in 25 years. The basic trends in Afghanistan are negative.

Pakistan pulsates, perhaps fracturing at its core. Russia's relations with the West are bad and unlikely to get much better very soon if at all. The effects of the rise of Chinese power on Asia writ large are, as Don Rumsfeld would put it, "a known unknown." Much of the developing world is reeling from world economic downturn.

This is the treacherous context in which US-India relations in the near-term – the next several years – will develop. Before addressing this more immediate period, let me emphasize that in my view, the United States and India have a very bright future together in the decades ahead. I stressed that in an initial speech as American Ambassador in India on September 7, 2001. I believed it then and I believe it now. As my mentor, the incomparable Henry Kissinger, has put it – "The world faces four major problems — terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the movement of the centre of gravity from the Atlantic region to Asia and the impact of a globalised economy on the world order. The US and India have compatible, indeed overlapping, vital national interests in all four areas."

If Henry Kissinger's strategic framework reflected in this quotation is the best way to view US-India bilateral ties over the very long run, the subject of my speech today is shorter term in approach. I will look today at prospects for the Indo-American relationship in the next few years. Here is my headline in that regard. It will take very hard work and skillful diplomacy from both governments to keep the US-India relationship on its current plateau and to avoid a steady decline in our bilateral ties. I try to explain why in the rest of this presentation.

Let me stress that the Obama Administration in my view has an affirmative view of India. It admires India's remarkable democracy. It is positively influenced by the Indian-American community whose political voice is growing in the United States. It hopes that India will become a partner on climate change and non-proliferation issues. It wishes to increase markedly the volume of US-India trade.

Thus, I take entirely at face value my old friend and Deputy Secretary of State Jim Steinberg's March 26 speech in which he said that "In the twenty-first century, the emergence of India as strong, stable, democratic and outwardly looking global player with global interests has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of the international system and the security and well-being of all, in a positive sum game," and, "The real test of the relationship between the US and India will be how we work together on the great common challenges of our era – strengthening the global trade and investment system, addressing transnational threats like nuclear weapons proliferation, terrorism and pandemic

disease, and meeting the urgent danger that is posed by climate change.” In short, I believe the Obama Administration genuinely wants good relations with India and will work hard toward that end.

Having said that, I am concerned that there may be a substantial change underway in the quality and the intensity of US-India relations which goes counter to the good intentions of the two sides. Let me explain what I have in mind and what worries me.

President George W. Bush based his transformation of US-India Relations on the core strategic principle of democratic India as a key factor in balancing the rise of Chinese power. To be clear, this was not based on the concept of containing China. As you know, there is no better way to clear a room of Indian strategists than to advocate containing China. Rather, it centered on the idea that the United States and India in the decades ahead both had enormous equities in promoting responsible international policies on the part of China and that deep US-India bilateral cooperation in that respect was in the vital national interests of both countries. It was with this strategic paradigm in mind that the Bush Administration treated India with at least as much importance as China. For my analytical purposes here today, I am not saying whether this strategic approach regarding India and China on the part of the Bush Administration was right or wrong. There were critics of this approach, including my good friend Brent Scowcroft, who believes that such an Asian balance of power paradigm is both antique and dangerous in the current era. In any case, without this China factor at the fore in Washington, in my view the Bush Administration would not have negotiated the Civil Nuclear Agreement and the Congress would not have approved it.

At the same time, the long US-India negotiation on the civil-nuclear deal concentrated Washington minds on the bilateral relation and created over time strong relationships between the principal policy makers on the two sides. More important, it led to the de-hyphenization of US-India relations, separating India as a rising great power from India-Pakistan history and singularity, especially during George W. Bush’s second term.

Although it is certainly early days, there are preliminary indications that the Obama Administration has a different policy orientation towards India. First, it is not clear that the Obama Administration has the same preoccupation with the rise of Chinese power and India’s balancing role in it. Rather, Washington is now naturally focused on US-China economic relations, the G-2 as some analysts have named it, not least because of PRC holdings of US Treasury bonds and its major place in the world economy. So China today appears, at least to me, to be on a substantially higher plane in US

diplomacy than India which seems to have been downgraded in Administration strategic calculations. Thank goodness the US-India 123 Agreement was completed because I am skeptical that it would have been successfully concluded under current conditions by this American Administration and Congress. In any case, there is no positive issue that I can see on the horizon that would have the same positive function and effects on US-India relations in the next several years as did the Civil Nuclear Agreement.

Moreover, I believe that it is fair to say that there is no one at the top of the Obama Administration who knows much about India. Let me stress this was also true in 2001 when the Bush team took office but they learned about India over the years for the reasons that I have suggested. By the same token, unsurprisingly there are now no close relationships between the policy makers in Washington and in New Delhi. This is nobody's fault but just the way it is and as we know in life, unfamiliarity often breeds suspicion. Unfortunately, I do not see the evolution of events that would produce such policy intimacy between the two nations. At the same time, there are numerous issues that could cause a variety of problems in the US-India relationship in the next months and years.

This list obviously must begin with Pakistan. This is clearly the most serious issue between the United States and India. For every good reason, the Obama Administration is devoting enormous thought to Pakistan, since it is the most dangerous foreign policy problem that Washington presently faces. Indeed, in my judgment, the evolving situation in Pakistan is potentially the most dangerous international situation since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. As Vice President Biden has warned: "It is hard to imagine a greater nightmare for America than the world's second-largest Muslim nation becoming a failed state in fundamentalists' hands, with an arsenal of nuclear weapons and a population larger than Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan and North Korea combined." And President Obama deserves great credit for his April 29 statement that, "on the military side, you are starting to see some recognition just in the last few days that the obsession with India as the moral threat to Pakistan has been misguided, and that their biggest threat right now comes internally." It has been many, many years since an American President has spoke so publicly, truthfully and bluntly to the leadership and people of Pakistan.

In my view, the United States has four vital national interests concerning what the Obama Administration calls AfPak, a holistic concept that unfortunately has been dear to the hearts of the Pakistan army for decades: 1) to prevent Pakistan's nuclear weapons and materials from coming into the possession of Islamic extremists; 2) to ensure that Afghanistan does not again become a

sanctuary for terrorists to launch attacks against the United States and its Allies and friends; 3) to avoid war between India and Pakistan; and 4) to prevent the Taliban and its radical collaborators from gaining control of Pakistan. Under the dynamic leadership of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke -- relentless, experienced, charismatic as the New York Times accurately describes him, Obama policymakers are attempting to positively influence Pakistan where every single important trend that I can identify is negative and getting worse. Hats off to Ambassador Holbrooke and the Administration for their strategic thinking in seeing Pakistan as America's most pressing important international problem and the one that currently poses the greatest threats to US vital national interests.

The Administration clearly has its work cut out for it. The chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen recent confirmed that elements of the ISI maintain links with extremists on Pakistan's borders with both Afghanistan and India. General David Petraeus, head of the US Central Command, speaks of cases "in the fairly recent past" where the ISI appeared to have warned Jihadis that their positions had been discovered. And the New York Times recently pointed out that ISI support to Taliban commanders extends to "money, military supplies and strategic planning guidance".

In addition, we all know of the spreading Wahabi-based fanaticism and violence inside Pakistan, away from the Taliban's Pashtun mountain strongholds and into Punjab. The possible effect of such an enveloping US preoccupation with Pakistan seems on its way in practical terms to re-hyphenating the US-India relationship, leading the Administration to see India largely through the lens of deeply disturbing developments in Pakistan, at the expense of a focus on strategic cooperation writ large between Washington and New Delhi. This will produce an understandable and growing US interest in trying to reduce tensions in the India-Pakistan relationship, not least because Islamabad will speciously argue that tensions with India and the Kashmir dispute are preventing it from moving robustly against the Islamic terrorists within their midst. So India may well encounter eventual US pressure from on the subject of Kashmir. This would be ironic since the Indian Government reached through secret negotiations with General Musharraf a momentous breakthrough on Kashmir which alas did not survive Musharraf's downward spiral and ultimate fall from power.

I strongly support the Administration's efforts to internationalize the Pakistan problem and to bring to bear as many external resources and capabilities as possible to try to begin to improve the situation in Pakistan. However, it would be a mistake for Washington to treat India as mostly at the margin of US consideration of policy toward Pakistan, as a lesser player on issues related to the future of Pakistan.

After all, it is India that is the object of Pakistan obsession, as President Obama pointed out. It is India that is continually attacked by terrorists based in Pakistan with the support of elements of the Pakistan military and today infiltration across the Line of Control is increasing. It is India that Pakistan claims is illegally occupying Kashmir. And it is only India that could again find itself at war with Pakistan, triggered by another Mumbai-like attack. So India is profoundly connected to the future of Pakistan, not on the periphery of it.

Let me make another point concerning Pakistan. Some Administration officials opine that the United States, India and Pakistan are now together in facing "a common threat, a common challenge, a common task", in seeking to defeat Islamic terrorists based in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Oh, if that were only so. But it is not. If you doubt me, please ask any member of the Pakistan army which has for three decades regarded Islamic terrorists as an abiding policy instrument against India and a crucial element in Pakistan's enduring concept of strategic depth. These objectives are deep in ISI's DNA and there is no magic wand available in Washington that will make that hard fact disappear. In short, there is no sign that the Government of Pakistan has made a fundamental national choice to seek to rid itself of Jihadism. Indeed, Secretary of State Clinton stated it well in April 23 testimony before the Congress, when she said that the Pakistan government "is basically abdicating to the Taliban and to the extremists."

I conclude my remarks centered directly on Pakistan by observing that no one in Washington on either side of the political aisle has a set of penetrating prescriptions that promise to end the internal slide of Pakistan. (If I may say so, the same is true in India.) Conditioning military assistance on the Pakistan army acting vigorously against the Taliban and its allies should be a US requirement. Training the Pakistan army in counter-insurgency techniques makes sense. Working out joint management of Predator attacks would reduce the public outcry in Pakistan. Diversifying NATO supply routes into Afghanistan to avoid over-dependence on Pakistan would help. Staying out of Pakistan's domestic politics is a must. Reducing the American public footprint in Pakistan would certainly be wise to try to deprive the Taliban of nationalist anti-foreign space. Attempting over the very long term to strengthen Pakistan civil society is a good Western investment.

But none of this gets in the next year or two at the fundamental problem. Islamic extremism is systemically on the rise in Pakistan and elites there -- both civilian and military -- do not appear to have the will or the means to resist. One, of course, urgently hopes that will change, but it is important to understand that US policy instruments are too weak to affect importantly these evolving

and disturbing societal trends in Pakistan. Put another way, in my judgment, American policies cannot improve the current deteriorating internal situation in Pakistan. That is a preeminent task for Pakistanis. But maladroit US actions can make the situation in Pakistan worse.

This brings me to Afghanistan, which presents another set of potential differences between Washington and New Delhi. First, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is now commonly said in the US that NATO cannot win in Afghanistan as long as Taliban sanctuaries exist in Pakistan. But as George Friedman concludes, “While U.S. and NATO forces must rely on increasingly unreliable Pakistani supply routes to fight the war in Afghanistan, Pakistan — fearful that the United States and India will establish a long-term strategic partnership — has the incentive to keep the jihadist insurgency boiling (preferably in Afghanistan) in order to keep the Americans committed to an alliance with Islamabad, however complex that alliance might be.” One must then ask how likely is it that Islamabad and the Pakistan military will change its long-time policy approach to Afghanistan?

As you know, the Obama Administration has announced in detail its policies regarding the war in Afghanistan, a conflict that the United States and its Allies are not winning and may be losing. As Henry Kissinger has noted, “The conventional army loses if it does not win. The guerrilla wins if he does not lose.” Perhaps with this in mind, President Obama has ordered the deployment of 21,000 US troops to Afghanistan, over and above the 40,000 already there. But he has made clear that in order to defeat Al Qaeda and the Taliban, America will have to embark on a long and expensive campaign of nation building in Afghanistan and solicit assistance and support from Afghanistan’s neighbors.

I applaud the emphasis that the Administration is now putting on preventing Afghanistan from once again becoming a sanctuary from which terrorists can plan and carry out attacks against the United States and its friends and Allies. Consistent with the German philosopher Nietzsche’s admonition that, “Man’s most enduring stupidity is forgetting what he is trying to do,” what we should be trying to do in Afghanistan is not, as Secretary of Defense Bob Gates stresses, attempting to make that country a modern democratic “Valhalla.” That goal is far beyond America’s and indeed the world’s capabilities.

The preeminent Australian expert David Kilcullen has an entirely different emphasis, “Counterinsurgency demands the continuous presence of security forces”; “local alliances and partnerships with community leaders; creation of self-defending populations”; and “operation of small-unit ground forces in tandem with local security forces.” In short, counterinsurgency does not

require improved governance, not to say democratic practices, from the capital, a fundamental transformation that is highly unlikely in Afghanistan. Long distance American admonitions, no matter how well intentioned, will not change that Afghan reality. I will go even further. Any US strategy toward the Taliban that depends on substantially improved performance from the government in Kabul will fail.

Rather, the fate of Afghanistan one way or the other will be decided at the local and village level in the longer run by the competence and fighting spirit of the Afghan army and by economic development which ordinary Afghans can see and feel. Both these crucial projects will take several years at a minimum to accomplish and, therefore, Washington should stop talking about an exit strategy from Afghanistan. The only exit strategy available to the United States in the next year or two is defeat. I am convinced that the Obama Administration knows this to be true and for many reasons the US will not cut and run from Afghanistan as some in New Delhi's salons seem to believe.

At the same time, it appears to me that India does not figure in an important way in US calculations regarding Afghanistan. Washington does not object to India's economic development activities in Afghanistan, but is apparently sensitive to Islamabad's complaints that India's real objective in Afghanistan is to deprive Pakistan of the strategic depth that as I said a moment ago has preoccupied Pakistan military planners for decades. So the Administration may not give sufficient weight to India's views regarding Afghanistan as say compared to those of Pakistan, the NATO Allies, Iran, China and Russia and seeks to limit the degree of Indian involvement in Afghanistan. This is especially odd given that according to polls, 74 per cent of Afghans see India favorably while 91 per cent of Afghans believe that Pakistan is playing a negative role in their country. For Washington to believe that India will not be a major player in the long-term future of Afghanistan is to ignore centuries of history, culture and mutual interaction between the two.

Finally, there is the notion emanating from Washington of so-called "reconciliation" with so-called "moderate" Taliban. This is a terrible idea, one of the very worst floating around Washington. Apart from the problem of defining the nature of an oxymoronic "moderate Taliban." would such a "reconcilable" Taliban be against terrorism against India? Not likely. Moreover, under current conditions in Afghanistan in which NATO may be losing the war, such a move on Washington's part could only be regarded by the resurgent Taliban as a serious sign of weakness and consequently fortify its will to win. As the great post-war Secretary of State Dean Acheson once trenchantly observed, "Negotiating ... assumes parties more anxious to agree than to disagree." Who believes

that concept currently applies to the Taliban? A moment may come in this long war when it will make sense for the United States to try to fracture the Taliban in Afghanistan by offering incentives to those willing to stop fighting. But that time, if it ever comes, would surely only be in the context of NATO succeeding militarily on the ground in Afghanistan, not before.

That brings us to Iran which is another knotty issue in US-India relations and a potential source of considerable bilateral tension. The Obama Administration is embarking on a diplomatic effort to persuade Tehran to suspend its nuclear weapons activities, a US initiative that all of us should applaud. However, this effort in my judgment has no chance of succeeding without a parallel strengthening of economic sanctions against Tehran. So it is just a matter of time before the US seeks to enlist India in applying a much more stringent sanctions regime concerning Iran, likely because of Russian opposition outside the legal authority of the UN Security Council. For many reasons with which you are all familiar, India is unlikely go along with such an American proposition.

China – It is not clear how Washington’s dominant preoccupation with economic cooperation with China will affect Indian Government calculations related to the US-India bilateral relationship and regional and Asian security. But if the US treats China in a privileged fashion and downgrades the quality of its substantive interaction with New Delhi, this is unlikely to produce spontaneous concessions from the Indian side on other matters of importance to Washington.

Nuclear Reprocessing and Civil-Nuclear Cooperation -- Although it will undoubtedly be a tough negotiation, it seems likely that Washington and New Delhi will begin a reprocessing agreement this calendar year which would promote the sale of US nuclear reactors to India. Were that negotiation to break down, recriminations would surely fly from both capitals.

India’s Nuclear Weapons – There are a cluster of issues related to India’s nuclear weapons. The Obama team endorses both the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty and a freeze on the production of fissile material. Neither of these appears to be acceptable to the Indian Government today. President Obama is planning to put Vice President Biden in charge of what is expected to be the difficult job of getting the Senate to ratify the CTBT. Speaking recently, a senior Indian official said that India would not accept the CTBT because it “was not explicitly linked to the goal of nuclear disarmament.” Finally, it is not clear at least to me how the Obama team basically regards India’s nuclear weapons – as a destabilizing factor in South Asia; as a fact of life to grudgingly tolerate; or as a natural development from a close democratic collaborator and rising great power?

Climate Change – Secretary of State Clinton told delegates from 16 countries at a recent State Department conference on energy and climate that “The United States is fully engaged and determined to lead and make up for lost time both at home and abroad.” The Washington Post reports that “Days after the Obama administration unveiled a push to combat climate change, Indian officials said it was unlikely to prompt them to agree to binding emission cuts, a position among emerging economies that many say derails effective action.

"If the question is whether India will take on binding emission reduction commitments, the answer is no. It is morally wrong for us to agree to reduce when 40 percent of Indians do not have access to electricity," said a member of the Indian delegation to the recently concluded U.N. conference in Bonn, Germany, which is a prelude to a Copenhagen summit in December on climate change. Given how seriously the Obama Administration takes global warming, this issue risks being an increasing irritant in the US-India relationship.

WTO/Protectionism/H 1-B Visas -- Despite appeals against trade protectionism, India imposed fresh tariffs on iron, steel and soybean oil in the early days of the financial crisis. Such a severe economic environment leads each country to fend for itself first — and India is no exception and neither is the most protectionist US Congress in many decades. In the same vein, President Obama's stimulus package stops US companies, largely in banking and financial services, that take federal bailout money from hiring H-1B visa holders for two years if they have laid off American workers in the previous six months. The Administration has vowed to tighten restrictions and step up oversight of all work visa applications. These protectionist pressures are unlike to subside any time soon.

I have enumerated a whole host of potential and even likely problems in the US-India relationship in the next few years. In concluding, I would like to suggest what the United States and India should do in the period ahead to avoid systemic deterioration in our bilateral ties. Here are my personal policy prescriptions.

Pakistan –There should be intimate, intensive and utterly private US-India talks on how to deal with a turbulent and increasingly chaotic Pakistan in the period ahead, including examining the policy implications of various specific scenarios regarding deteriorating events in Pakistan. What seemed worst case a year ago in Pakistan may be on our mutual doorstep in the months ahead. I recognize that this is an exceptionally sensitive suggestion but it is absolutely necessary for a host of reasons, not least because it would be the United States and India that would be most affected by a

Talibanisation of Pakistan. With that in mind, how can it be that we are not comprehensively and candidly talking together about it? Indeed, there may come a time if Pakistan continues its gradual descent into anarchy when the United States and India may be forced to adopt together, along with Iran and other nations, a strategy of attempting to quarantine the Wahabi infection as much as possible within Pakistan and to try to minimize its export.

Afghanistan – NATO is not currently winning the long war in Afghanistan. And the US, because of concerns in Islamabad, continues to find India more a liability than an asset regarding the future of Afghanistan. As an Indian friend said to me in 2002. “You Americans seem to think that Afghanistan is a scone, it is a baklava”. How prophetic he was. India will be a major player in Afghanistan whether the US likes it or not. That should be regarded in Washington as a positive factor as it seeks to reverse the problematical trends in Afghanistan and Washington should encourage India to enlarge its role in that country.

International Terrorism - This cluster of issues I have just mentioned is, of course, closely connected to the rise of Islamic extremism and the War on Terror. It is difficult to think of two countries outside of the Middle East that will be more strategically affected by this phenomenon than India and the United States. We talk far too little about this together, including what to say and do about it. In any case, Washington must not differentiate between “Bad Taliban” which kill American and “Good Taliban” which do not, but do mount attacks against India. Such a misguided US distinction would be poison for the US-India relationship.

Iran – In both countries there is considerable domestic political resonance and controversy surrounding this issue. It will not be diminished under the public spotlight. Washington needs to decisively accept India’s civilizational ties to Iran and act on that fact in American policies; and New Delhi needs to decisively accept and act in its policies on the fact that if Iran acquires a nuclear arsenal, it will dangerously disrupt regional and global equilibrium and be very bad for India over the long-term. I believe that the Obama Administration has it right in its approach to Iran. It is attempting to avoid a situation in 2010 or so in which the President faces essentially a binary choice regarding how to deal with Iran’s nuclear weapons program – either to launch a US military attack on those facilities with disastrous long term consequences, or to acquiesce to an Iranian nuclear weapons capability with disastrous long term consequences. So I believe that India should be far more forthcoming regarding much stronger international economic sanctions against Iran. That is the best hope for avoiding a catastrophe in the Middle East.

China – Again a delicate subject. But managing the rise of Chinese power is likely to be the most important strategic challenge for both countries in the next two decades. Containment is not an option but attempting together to shape Chinese policies in positive directions is. In particular, Washington should abandon any thoughts of a G-2. As former NSC Senior Director for Asia Dennis Wilder has written, “The G-2 moniker worries Asians... From Japan to India, there are concerns that America's search for a solution to its worst economic crisis since the Great Depression may lead the Obama administration into not only expanded strategic economic and political dialogues with China but a full-blown strategic partnership. As the center of gravity of U.S. economic interests moves from Europe to Asia, they worry, the United States could become enamored of a "China first" approach.” This mistake must be avoided.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation – The two sides should initiate the US-India reprocessing agreement in the next six months. India should put aside any thought of renegotiating the 123 Agreement. If that Agreement is reopened, it will never be concluded.

Nuclear weapons – India should continue to cooperate closely with the US on non-proliferation and Washington should accept that India will mount a slow and modest upgrade of its nuclear arsenal in the years ahead. The United States should treat India as a nuclear weapons state. Any American backsliding in that regard would produce a very strong negative reaction from New Delhi.

Defense Cooperation – We need intensified interaction between the two militaries on military doctrine, force planning, weapons acquisition, interoperability, joint exercises, intelligence exchange, and threat assessments. In the next five years perhaps nothing would have such a positive long term impact on the bilateral relationship as India's purchase of its next generation multi-role combat aircraft from the United States.

East Asia Security – Relations between India and Japan are improving. This is good for both countries and for the United States. These contacts should develop into governmental trilateral strategic discussions.

The Middle East – India has pervasive and growing vital national interests in the region but the two capitals mostly do not talk about it in a serious way. That should change.

Climate Change – The two sides should agree to disagree and not allow this issue to infect other dimensions of the bilateral relationship.

WTO – This may be in the too hard category given the differences between Washington and New Delhi but at a minimum both sides should drain the theatrics out of their exchanges on the subject.

US-India bilateral trade – Given the many challenges to bilateral relationship ties that I have discussed today, US-India trade and investment in the next few years is more important than ever. Indeed, it can have a salutary effect on the other aspects of the relationship. So I strongly encourage CII and the Indian business to intensify their engagement with American counterparts.

I would like to end my presentation as I began it, by expressing optimism with regard to the long-term prospects for the US-India relationship. The combination of our largely overlapping vital national interests and shared democratic values should produce a bright future for strategic collaboration between New Delhi and Washington in future decades. But in the immediate period before us, our bilateral ties are likely to be more problematical than we have seen in recent years. I want to stress that there is nothing inevitable about this. The two governments through their respective policies can avoid a downturn in our bilateral interaction and I, of course, hope that is what they will do. Ralph Waldo Emerson may have been overdoing it a bit when he asserted that, “There is properly no history, only biography.” But he is right that the individual leaders at the top of our two governments, beginning with the American President and Indian Prime Minister, will have a determining impact on the near-term outlook for US-India relations. We wish them well.

Thank you for your attention.

I look forward to your comments and questions.

Ambassador Blackwill is former US Ambassador to India, Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Planning and Presidential Envoy to Iraq. He is currently Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation.
