

**'The United States and India – A Shared Strategic Future'**  
**October 21, 2011,**  
**WWF Auditorium, Lodi Estate, New Delhi.**

For the first time, Aspen Institute India in collaboration with Council on Foreign Relations, USA brought out a joint study group report "The United States and India – A Shared Strategic Future" on the global issues that are facing India and the United States of America. Following the launch of the Aspen India-Council on Foreign Relations, USA, (CFR) Joint Report in Washington D.C. and New Delhi in September 2011, Aspen Institute India organized a session in New Delhi with Ambassador Robert D. Blackwill, former US Ambassador to India, Ambassador Naresh Chandra, former Indian Ambassador to the US, Ambassador Brajesh Mishra, Former National Security Advisor on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011. The session was moderated by Mr. Gautam Thapar, Chairman, Avantha Group.



The discussion focused on the findings of the report on the geopolitical and geo-economic issues facing US and India which includes:

- Rise of China
- Conflict in Afghanistan
- Future of Pakistan
- Turmoil and transition of Mid-East
- Climate Change
- Energy Technology collaboration
- Economic cooperation in a period of global economic challenges
- Opportunities for defense partnership.

Ambassador Blackwill started the discussion by referring to the genesis and findings of the report that touched on the Nuclear Pact, technology, defense, and security.

Mr. Blackwill highlighted the three core convictions as the foundation of the Report:

- 1. More powerful and influential India in international arena is in US national interest,
  - 2. US that maintains its power and influence in international arena, especially in Asia, is in India's national interest and,
  - 3. Closest possible policy collaboration between India and US in all dimensions of their relationship is important to both nations that will help in sustaining a favorable balance of power in Asia and beyond, and also promotes international peace and stability beginning in Asia.
- Mr. Blackwill conceded that US strategy with respect to Pakistan has failed and a new one is needed. He emphasized that after 2014 troop withdrawal in Afghanistan, there can be no de facto Pakistan veto regarding India's participation in Afghanistan.

On China, Ambassador Blackwill emphasized that US and India must engage with China, given its recent stand on several issues that may have an impact on the region.

On Afghanistan, Ambassador Blackwill emphasized that earlier the US was hesitant about India's role in that country but this year the US welcomes it in Afghanistan. He felt that it was almost prophetic, in the context of the direction of US Policy with Pakistan and Pakistan's relationship with Afghanistan. Mr. Blackwill stressed that Pakistan's behavior has enhanced the pace of US-India strategic cooperation.

On the Presidential election next year in the US, Ambassador Blackwill said that the structural relationship with India will remain no matter who the next President of the US will be. 'Neo-isolationism' is an antique term as the US can't withdraw from the world but the fact remains that the US is occupied with economic problems that can eclipse foreign relations.

Ambassador Brajesh Mishra lauded the ambitious theme of the report and hoped that in a decade the US and India can become key allies. He reiterated that there were large areas of shared values in the relationship that are not dependent on treatise on which both sides can differ.

Ambassador Mishra said that the US and China should have a good relationship. India-US Nuclear Agreement has been signed but China doesn't want the US and India to have a strategic ally role and would prefer to see India embroiled in problems.

Reminiscing about the improved relations between the two countries under Bill Clinton's administration and today's situation Ambassador Chandra opined that there was catching up to do on Track II discussions. Outside of the structured dialogue, action-oriented efforts were needed. Sketching a maximalist position on shared common interests, policy prescriptions, interaction can have its limits but it would benefit both US and India to optimize the potential relationship.

Ambassador Chandra stated that India-US and also India-China relations are important. It's a work in progress in which advances are needed to be made. Countries are faced with domestic problems and need to help to put out fires. He also emphasized that the Mid-East situation where the US wants India to have a bigger role and as far as policy prescriptions go, the US will welcome and encourage Indian participation in the Mid-East.

The video can be watched here:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/aspeninstituteindia?feature=mhee#p/u/3/pmrJabDTAvY>