



## “U.S.-INDIA STRATEGIC DIALOGUE”

### A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY PARTNERSHIP ALYSSA AYRES\*

#### FINDING A NEW EQUILIBRIUM

Twenty years ago I landed in Delhi for the first time, a young college student on a semester abroad. India was a different place, far away, and we Americans knew little about it. Back then you’d see khadi-clad Western tourists ambling around CP, Doordarshan was the only channel around (although Prannoy Roy offered a half-hour hint of the future with *The World This Week*), and talking with parents back home meant booking a trunk call and then waiting around for hours, or trudging to the PCO/STD/ISD booth. Cows grazed on piles of trash in concrete bins outside our youth hostel (the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra) in the heart of the Diplomatic Enclave. Today, the tourists in handspun have been replaced by bankers in Brioni; Prannoy Roy now runs a media empire and cuts deals with NBC/Universal and Time Warner; everyone has a mobile phone and the rates are the world’s lowest, shrinking the globe and pulling family instantly close; and there are a lot fewer cows, not to mention no more trash piles, outside the youth hostel, which now also houses India’s preeminent software industry association, NASSCOM. These bookends of memory show how dramatic a transformation has taken place, and how much more deeply our countries are now intertwined.

The distance, unfamiliarity, and lack of connection between India and the U.S. over much of the twentieth century, as so many have noted, contributed to our inability to realize the obvious potential of this relationship. What Dennis Kux has aptly termed an “estrangement” was felt not only at the official level (between governments), but was also reflected in the relatively thin linkages outside of government. Business connections were intentionally limited, a primary result of Indian industrial policies to protect its domestic market. Academic ties existed but were again thin; exchanges could be measured in the dozens annually. Nonprofit or NGO sector collaborations were a great strength—look at the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations’ accomplishments, for example—but no one would argue that they were able to propel the relationship forward in and of themselves.

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We are in a different place now, not only due to a changed balance of trust between Washington and New Delhi, but as importantly due to the increasing importance of private, nongovernmental actors (for-profit as well as non) in shaping international engagement. Jessica Mathews wrote more than ten years ago about the great “power shift” reshaping our world—the global decentralization of political and economic power from their locus within state capitals, and the rise of nongovernmental actors, particularly via markets, media, and civil society. Corporations are global, with employees and interests all over the world. Technology has transformed our connectivity and our media environment, offering local voices a global platform (and winnowing down the once-privileged role of western media at the same time). Heightened mobility of labor has created a more flexible global workforce at both the elite as well as unskilled levels, linking populations with families back home. We now speak routinely about transnational markets, world citizens, and global public goods.

I view these developments as largely positive. While some see factors of globalization (particularly global corporations and markets) as the signs of a dystopian future, the optimist would see in these shifts the seeds of utterly new kinds of partnership. I can imagine a world where Indian and American researchers can together invent low-cost solar cells that revolutionize the scale and dissemination potential of solar power—helping us both transition away from coal, and as importantly, helping electrify places where power grids have yet to reach. Or a world where a hybrid Nano might be a sixteen-year old American’s first car, turning hybrids into an entry-level rather than bourgeois bohemian option. Or a world where our governments, NGOs, and technology companies leverage the scale and power of decentralized communication to better raise awareness of missing children, giving those in bonded captivity a better chance at being found.

From this vantage point, India and the United States are perfectly situated for the twenty-first century world, and for different kinds of partnerships on systemic global challenges, challenges so big and borderless that they simply cannot be managed by governments alone. So beyond the obvious transformation in official ties between the U.S. and India—the narrative of estrangement to engagement—I would argue that the growing integration of our private sectors now offers the most important element of possibility for U.S.-India cooperation. As we observed in the report of the Asia Society’s Task Force on U.S. Policy toward India:

*Globally, we face a world where our governments confront eroded authority and problems of collective action, with multilateral institutions that no longer reflect current realities, and globalization’s challenges of rapid contagion—whether financial, biological, or digital—that require governmental coordination of the closest kind. Many of these twenty-first century challenges must be addressed through government initiatives, but many others will require deep engagement with the private sector. With the great strengths, the ingenuity, and the complementary perspectives that the U.S. and Indian public and private sectors can mobilize, the two countries together have the potential to make a difference to the most pressing challenges of our lifetime.*

The suggestions which follow are offered here to spur discussion on how India and the United States might creatively prod our governments to tap the energy of our private sectors to work

collaboratively on global problems: climate change, counterterrorism, proliferation, transnational crime (including drug cartels and trafficking of women and children), and humanitarian relief. None of these can be tackled by government action by itself, so the recommendations below assume the centrality of public-private cooperation for success. As a result, the orientation of these recommended policy options tends toward techniques of enhancing large-scale coordination and information sharing, better linking policymakers in government with faster-paced innovators in our companies and civil societies, as well as recommendations for government incentives to steer private investment or innovation in directions that benefit the long-term for us all. Examples are intended to be merely illustrative, not definitive.<sup>1</sup>

## COLLABORATION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Copenhagen's difficulties illustrate where India and the U.S. have differences on how our societies should compromise and to what extent we will be bound internationally. These differences will continue, because they center on perceptions of equity against vast prosperity gaps. But we must continue the dialogue to reach a future agreement.

Progress tackling climate change will be driven by innovation and technology partnerships. This knowledge by definition resides outside government—in research-oriented companies, universities, and with commercialization experts. Public policy should center on finding affordable, efficient and renewable energy, including affordable ways to transfer technology that rapidly expands its use while protecting intellectual property. The key role for governments here will be harnessing private sector creativity and incentivizing its dissemination. The second most important thing our federal governments can do will be fostering exchanges among companies, NGOs, state and local governments, particularly on matters of conservation, recycling, and approaches to zero-waste business. The following are practical suggestions to move towards these goals:

- Focus on innovation and technology transfer in clean tech, emphasizing scalability:
  - Develop tax and export incentives to encourage tech transfer partnerships across the private sector, including low-royalty licensing models that allow rapid expansion of manufacturing capability at much lower cost while protecting IP. Gilead Sciences has pioneered these arrangements in the biotech/pharmaceutical sector, and the licensing model has potential application for other innovation-driven sectors where scaling production at lower price points would be desirable.<sup>2</sup>
  - Spur open-source initiatives through (for example) a U.S. National Labs partnership with Tata Institute of Fundamental Research—perhaps focused on advanced energy systems and mitigation technologies, carbon capture and storage.
  - Develop Indo-U.S. networks of venture funders, potentially alongside government support, for this crucial commercialization step in the innovation cycle.
- Create mechanisms to share best practices among government, civil society, and our state and municipal level governments:

- Delhi government can share with Detroit and others its experience converting public transport to CNG en masse.
  - Water use: our cities can gain from best practices consultation on resource use, waste, and distribution challenges. The U.S. Western Governors' Association confronts water resource challenges akin to those faced by Indian states grappling with drought and large agricultural needs.
  - Develop a pool of best practices in sustainability, where corporate leaders in sustainability like Hewlett-Packard can contribute their experience from recycling to green building to creating low-carbon IT products; Coca-Cola could showcase its zero-impact approach to water, and Walmart could explain its move to zero-waste stores.
  - NGO involvement will be crucial—the watchdog role that US and Indian environmental NGOs have played remains singularly important to keep issues on the public agenda, and push publics and politicians to act.
- The Asia Society Task Force recommended envisioning a significant global impact on water use by, for example, developing an exchange market for water credits (analogous to carbon trade) based at the Bombay Stock Exchange rather than Europe or Chicago. This would leverage India's cutting-edge capital markets capabilities and give India global leadership on a major climate change concern, one acquiring national security significance for India.

#### COLLABORATION ON COUNTERTERRORISM

The Mumbai attacks of 2008 suddenly made India's struggle against terrorism visible for Americans. What had been a more abstract concept became visceral, as the televised three-day siege brought home to all Americans the shared vulnerability of our open societies. To further our collaboration on counterterrorism, already much enhanced over the past year, we must keep building regular close and trusting engagement, and continue to expand information, intelligence, best practices, counterterrorism technology, and law enforcement sharing—and do so reciprocally. Federal governments are at the heart of such collaboration (especially intelligence), but cities and states face crises as the first responders, as does the private sector where landmark buildings present soft targets.

We are making good progress toward an expanded counterterrorism relationship—increased exchanges and more regular consultations are taking place; this will only increase as American and Indian government officials who came of age during 9/11 and 26/11 assume leadership roles in national security institutions in both countries. Recently, we have instituted creative joint training with Amtrak and Indian Railways officials, for example, and these should continue. We can also expand the governmental exchanges:

- Create official exchanges across intel and nodal agencies and national law enforcement agencies (such as with the U.S. National Counterterrorism Center and the Office of the Counterterrorism Coordinator at State with Indian counterparts).

- Continue to expand classified information sharing and with ongoing consultation on how to continually expand that intelligence sharing beyond our capitals. The David Headley case, with its disturbing global tentacles, illustrates the urgent stakes involved.
- Develop a longer-term plan to integrate India into the English-language intelligence sharing network that binds the U.S. with Canada, the UK, Australia, and NZ.
- Be creative on the intelligence sharing front: create an open-source partnership with India, perhaps drawing on designated research centers at universities in both countries, which may result in easier and more extensive collaboration without the burdens of classification.
- Continue to enhance maritime security consultation, with special focus on Coast Guard exchanges and port security initiatives.
- Integrate consultation with state and local “first responders” in both countries:
  - continue building links between urban police forces, such as the Mumbai Police with NYPD.
  - continue and expand rail/public transport security consultation such as that underway between Amtrak and DC Metro with Indian railways.

As noted above, we must also acknowledge the responsibilities shouldered by the private sector to prevent terrorism attacks on the soft targets of commercial and everyday life. Symbolic landmarks like the World Trade Center and the Taj Palace and Oberoi Hotels suffered excruciating losses. Companies now assess security risks as rigorously as governments do.

- Develop much greater government-industry consultation on communications technologies, crisis needs, and operational plans—if not “tabletop” exercises—to hone real-time cooperation in future crises.
- Develop joint public-private security task force for exchange of best practices on securing soft targets, sharing threat intelligence, private security techniques, etc. Such a task force would ideally draw on our leading corporations alongside private security firms increasingly on the front lines (for example, G4S, Mahindra Special Services Group, TerraForce).

#### NONPROLIFERATION AGENDA

Although the United States and India overcame more than thirty years of differences over nonproliferation through the passage of the civil nuclear initiative in 2008, lingering suspicions remain on both sides. In India, some fear that the United States will not make good on its promise of “full civil nuclear cooperation” with India due to delays in licensing and other technical requirements. In the United States, some worry that the steps necessary for U.S. private sector firms to work in India will take so long that American firms will lose out, ceding opportunity to French and Russian parastatal firms. In this context, it is imperative that the U.S.

and India continue the closest possible consultation on these necessary steps to allow civil nuclear cooperation to be fully realized, and ensure the promise of future civil nuclear trade between us.

India's continued commitment to Rajiv Gandhi's call for the non-discriminatory elimination of nuclear weapons offers a point of convergence with President Obama's call for a path to their elimination. India remains concerned about the threat of proliferation; moreover, India has brought its export controls in line with international standards, has indicated willingness to work toward a multilateral Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty, and was a strong supporter of the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism. With this agreement on the long-term goal, and with India now "inside the nonproliferation tent" as a result of the NSG's 2008 exemption, we should further intensify consultation and cooperation on global nonproliferation concerns. Most of this work will take place between our federal governments:

- Engage India in an ongoing dialogue about managing the dangers of our nuclear age. The dialogue should encompass
  - safety and security of systems;
  - reducing alert;
  - identifying a path to ending the nuclear age through reduction of weapons; and
  - treaties that will help end it.
- Include India in the 2010 NPT Review Conference.
- Consult extremely closely with India as the US reviews its stance on CTBT; encourage India to indefinitely maintain its moratorium on testing.
- Continue and expand the U.S. Department of Energy's NNSA important work on maritime trade and security, focusing on ports and container security (such as the Megaports Initiative).

There are opportunities to engage the private sector on nonproliferation cooperation. Civil society groups, such as Global Zero, have an important thought leadership role in the global nonproliferation effort. And on the trade-security challenge, especially as Indian ports seek to develop their freight throughput capabilities, coordination with global shipping lines as well as airlines and private port authorities will offer important knowledge.

#### COLLABORATION ON TRANSNATIONAL CRIME

India and the United States both face immense challenges dealing with the problems of criminal cartels and human traffickers. Our dialogue and cooperation on these global scourges has been limited, in part due to the natural complications of federal systems—our federal governments are the level at which we engage one another, but our states have primary responsibility for law enforcement in both our countries. While in the United States, the FBI has a national-level responsibility for crimes that cross state lines, in India, the precise analogue to the FBI does not

fully exist. (India's new National Investigation Agency, created by Parliament after 26/11, will fill this role.)

In addition, however, the U.S. Congressionally-mandated annual evaluations on human rights and trafficking in persons have not created an environment of the greatest openness and collaborative spirit. Washington should take the initiative to explore ways to overcome the trust deficit created by these annual evaluations, and look to chart a course for greater collaboration—perhaps by eliminating the annual threat of sanctions that result from perceived inadequate performance. The role of external evaluator, in this writer's view, will be best played by independent organizations outside of the U.S. executive branch.

On matters of transnational crime, India has seen, over the past fifteen years, regional criminal cartels operating in the South Asian region (with transit through the UAE) emerge as powerful facilitators of terrorism (most prominently Dawood Ibrahim's "D-Company"). The nexus of smuggling and media piracy—which hurts Bollywood as much as it does other film industries—with terrorism finance now means that the law enforcement investigative function has added impact on counterterror activities. Given the importance of this link, we should look to:

- Build on our growing counterterrorism cooperation by starting a regular U.S.-India dialogue, with occasional meetings involving authorities from the UAE, on criminal cartels and terrorism. This dialogue should engage the U.S. State Dept and Indian MEA in tandem with respective MHA/DHS/DOJ counterparts. A great challenge will be finding the right counterparts, and we should work closely to make this an effective consultative group.
- Build on the increasing information sharing work underway on terrorism to share information on criminal cartels as well.

Trafficking of women and children offers additional arenas for cooperation involving our civil societies and private sectors, particularly in matters of awareness-raising. We are only at the beginning stages of cooperation on this terrible crime, and can do much more together. The close relationship of trafficking with bonded labor and/or forced prostitution is the modern-day equivalent of slavery, and brave NGOs have been working for decades to stop it. One area we could quickly enhance through focused U.S.-India consultation could be the use of dedicated institutions and technology to draw attention to the missing, and help aid investigation and recovery. We could:

- Support an Indian delegation (perhaps from the MEA, Ministry of Women and Children, and Law) to spend time at the U.S. National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which uses public campaigns (the "Amber Alert") to draw attention to missing children. The NCMEC has grown into a model organization, and an effective node for public-private partnership.
- Engage private companies and organizations that have taken strong public stances on trafficking and exploitation. Again taking the NCMEC as a model, its roster of more than thirty corporate partners includes household names (CA, Honeywell, Walmart,

AOL, Google, *inter alia*) which have developed unique ways they can contribute their capabilities to the search for missing children. Another good international model of partnership is the AFL-CIO's Solidarity Center, which has formed coalitions in cities around the world with local business, unions, and communities to raise public awareness about human trafficking.<sup>3</sup>

- Devote and/or mobilize resources to support the Indian NGOs that rescue women and children from places of captivity. Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn have shown how raising awareness can mobilize results that make a real difference to people's lives.

#### DEEPENING COOPERATION ON HUMANITARIAN AND EMERGENCY NEEDS

India and the United States have enormous potential to build on the successful humanitarian crisis cooperation demonstrated with their joint response to the 2004 Asian tsunami. In the intervening years, joint naval exercises have served to further consolidate our navies' ability to work together, along with others in Asia, and this should clearly continue. A much more engaged maritime and humanitarian cooperation will unfold as India modernizes its naval capabilities.

India's decision to purchase maritime surveillance aircraft from an American supplier (Boeing) will give it stronger warning abilities in its own region, and the prospect of more extensive Indian defense procurement from U.S. suppliers would further enhance our ability to coordinate response. In addition, as the United States and India move forward on civilian space cooperation, we could look to satellite resources for real-time data collection on matters like flooding, refugee movements, or natural disasters such as fires. This kind of information capability will enhance the ability to coordinate relief operations among all partners.

On humanitarian cooperation, we should not overlook the crucial role that our private sectors—both for-profit and non—play in mobilizing resources for emergency response as well as reconstruction phases in the aftermath of disasters. For example, leading relief organizations like Atlanta-based CARE regularly work with corporations to launch targeted initiatives around the world—and is a regular partner of USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance on emergency relief in India, where CARE has been working for more than sixty years, as well as elsewhere around the world. Or take another example, this time from the corporate sector: India's Confederation of Indian Industry mobilizes their member companies for focused assistance efforts wherever disaster occurs; the increasing engagement of US and Indian companies in joint ventures doubles the partnership potential on humanitarian aid and relief operations.

In addition to the above examples, we could take a more expansive view of the opportunity for US-India partnership to address humanitarian challenges of a regular, recurrent kind, such as food security in India. Here, lasting change will come over time through transformation of local economic opportunities and expansion of institutions to support them.

- The growth and development of a modern supply chain, a process now underway in India, stands to transform India's rural economy by creating new industries and employment opportunities within them, and with more productive livelihoods comes



greater purchasing power for those who had been dependent on the land. Indian companies, on their own and in joint ventures with American and other partners, are taking the lead, and the opportunities for cooperation are substantial.

- As important will be the re-engagement of US-India scientific cooperation on agriculture, with a view to ushering in the next generation successor to the Green Revolution of the 1960s. Mobilizing partnership in this space, as with other sectors discussed above, will require engaging our governments, foundations, universities, and our innovative companies, where R&D is increasingly taking place in the United States.

Unlike with decades past, India has become a donor nation. India does have its own developmental needs, but in recent years it has undertaken important direct contributions to other countries (such as Afghanistan) facing situations of scarcity. And in 2008, the Indian government granted an export exemption that allowed the World Food Program to purchase Indian rice for provision to 22 countries facing severe needs (Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Haiti, among others). So close coordination between the US and India, especially in cases for which India offers substantially more cost-effective means of providing assistance, mark the beginning of new kinds of humanitarian cooperation where we work as equal partners to make a positive impact elsewhere in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> A few of the policy recommendations in this paper, as noted in the text itself, were presented in *Delivering on the Promise: Advancing US Relations with India*, the report of Asia Society's Task Force on US Policy toward India (New York: Asia Society, 2009). The author served as director of that Task Force. Complete report available online: [www.asiasociety.org/files/pdf/DeliveryOnThePromise\\_USRelationsWithIndia.pdf](http://www.asiasociety.org/files/pdf/DeliveryOnThePromise_USRelationsWithIndia.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Three McLarty Associates clients are referenced in this essay among the many examples of private sector partnerships on global challenges: Gilead Sciences, Walmart, and Google.

<sup>3</sup> See the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's website for more detailed descriptions of the partnering corporations and their contributions to the effort. Via [www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en\\_US&PageId=2295](http://www.missingkids.com/missingkids/servlet/PageServlet?LanguageCountry=en_US&PageId=2295)