



Message to the India Today Conclave

Secretary Colin L. Powell

Washington, DC

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I am delighted to address your "India Today" Conclave.

Well before he took office, President Bush set the goal of improving relations with India: a nation of over one billion people, a dynamic multi-ethnic democracy; the ancestral home of over one-and-a-half million Americans; a critical presence in Asia; a nation of enormous achievement and promise.

When Prime Minister Vajpayee first met President Bush in November 2001, he embraced the objective of transforming our bilateral relationship calling the United States and India "natural allies." Prime Minister Vajpayee was right. Both our nations draw strength from our traditions and the talents of our diverse citizenries. Both our nations seek to stretch the bounds of human knowledge and seize the opportunities of a 21st century world. And both of us recognize that our cooperation can greatly benefit both of our nations and the international community.

Today, the world's oldest democracy - the United States - and the world's biggest democracy - India -- are pursuing a shared vision of where our relationship can go, not where it has been. We are working side-by-side against terrorism, the spread of infectious diseases, environmental degradation and trafficking in drugs and human beings. We are pooling our strengths to stabilize troubled regions. Together, we are building a strategic partnership based on our shared commitment to freedom, prosperity and security.

President Bush and Prime Minister Vajpayee have committed our governments to a variety of steps to deepen and expand that strategic partnership, which I look forward to advancing during my trip to the region next week. We are working to create an environment that increases economic activity between our countries, including high-tech commerce. We also seek to enhance our collaboration on civilian nuclear cooperation and peaceful uses of space technology. We have embarked on a dialogue on strategic stability. And we will further our shared nonproliferation goal of keeping weapons of mass destruction out of the hands of terrorists and rogue states.

The United States and India also share an interest in a united, peaceful, democratic Afghanistan and Iraq. And, on behalf of President Bush and the American people, I thank the government and people of India for their contributions of funds and "know how" to the international reconstruction efforts underway in Afghanistan and for the similar commitments you have made to assist in the reconstruction of Iraq. In both cases, India is helping long-suffering peoples emerge from decades of tyranny and terror to build a better future. By helping the people of Afghanistan and Iraq, you also are fostering regional and global stability.

This is a time when statesmanship, vision and determination can bring about historic change. The farsighted steps toward the peaceful resolution of disputes being taken by India and Pakistan under the leadership of Prime Minister Vajpayee and President Musharraf have given fresh hope to the citizens of both countries. Two years ago, India and Pakistan were spiraling toward conflict. Now, they are shaping a composite dialogue and expanding bilateral trade and people-to-people ties.

The United States desires close relationships with each country in the South Asia region. In the coming months, as India and Pakistan work to resolve their differences, the United States will remain a steadfast friend and supporter of the peacemakers on both sides, and we will continue to build strong bilateral ties with each country in its own right.

Indeed, U.S.-India relations are the best that they have ever been, and we are confident that they will grow even better, as we continue to advance a rich agenda of bilateral, regional and global importance.

This audience of corporate leaders knows, however, that even though our bilateral relationship is at its highest point in history, our economic cooperation has not even begun to reach its full potential. U.S. - India joint ventures in the high-tech area have prospered in recent years, but we must increase our economic ties across the board to the advantage of Indians and Americans alike.

The U.S. market remains much more open to Indian firms and their products than is the Indian market to U.S. trade and investment. The American people will find it less difficult to accept outsourcing if India helps generate more American jobs by supporting trade liberalization in the World Trade Organization and further opening its markets to U.S. exports.

The business community's insights and ideas can help both of our governments create favorable conditions for an expansion of our economic relationship. You can help us grasp the great opportunities that scientific advance and the worldwide spread of political and market freedoms offer to both our economies.

A thriving, peaceful, democratic India is taking its place on the world stage, and the United States looks forward to acting in close partnership with her. In the years ahead, I see the U.S.-Indian relationship becoming as rich and vibrant as a "Bollywood" blockbuster. To be sure, there will be twists and turns of plot and some challenges for the characters to overcome, but I have no doubt that there will be a happily-ever-after result for India, for America and for the world community.

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