



India and Pakistan: On the Heels of President Bush's Visit

R. Nicholas Burns, Under Secretary for Political Affairs

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It is a great pleasure for me to be back at Heritage. I have deep respect for the work that Heritage has done in its history and continues to do to promote freedom and democracy in the world, which is, of course, the core of President Bush's foreign policy.

I want to talk to you this morning about the President's trip to Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan—with a bit as well about how we look at the South Asia region, its future, and American interests there, and something specifically about our new strategic partnership with India, which I think was evident to all of you who saw what the President did and listened to what he and Prime Minister Singh said. I also want to talk about the important kind of relationship we have with Pakistan in fighting terrorism and what we're trying to do to help stabilize Afghanistan. This won't be a long presentation, but I do want to give you a sense of what the President tried to accomplish during his trip.

The President feels, of course, that it was a very successful trip to South Asia. He just returned yesterday in the wee hours of the morning. The trip accomplished what we had intended it to. We believe that American interests in South Asia are now at the core of what we're trying to do in the world. There's no question that trying to achieve stability in Afghanistan is a vital American interest. There's also no question that trying to create a better, stronger, deeper strategic partnership with India, as well as to continue with our priority discussions with the Pakistani government on counter terrorism, is in our interest.

These are strategies at the center of American foreign policy, and though it's always difficult to make comparisons, I don't think there has been a time since 1947 when the United States has been so focused on South Asia and when we've done so much to try to build up relations with the countries of South Asia. The President spoke repeatedly in the speech he gave at the Asian Society on February 22 before his trip, and particularly in his remarks on Friday night in New Delhi, about the fact that these countries are of critical importance to American interests in the world, as well as American values in the world. We are trying very hard to accentuate our relations with countries in this region.

America and Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, the President met with President Karzai and pledged continued American support to help stabilize that country through the presence of our 16,000 American soldiers and the increasing union that our soldiers and our military command have with the NATO forces in the region. The security situation in Afghanistan is quite challenging; we've seen an increase in the number of attacks by the Taliban and al-Qaeda on both the NATO force, as well as the American-led coalition force, and on Afghan civilians and Afghan authorities over the past year. We do not see this as a strategic threat to the government, meaning we believe that the government can withstand these attacks; but we certainly want to do everything we can to diminish them, and you can be assured that we are dedicated to maintaining a strong, credible, very aggressive military force along with our European allies and NATO in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future.

We also pay a lot of attention to trying to help the Afghan government deal with its other problems in building up the infrastructure of the country; in providing assistance in democracy and the rule of law, both at a central government level as well as among the regional governments; and, of course, dealing with the very difficult problem of opium production and the sales of narcotics from Afghanistan itself. But I think in his first visit to Afghanistan, the President was able to reassure President Karzai that our relations are very strong, that the American commitment is undiminished, and that we intend to be a very good friend and partner to Afghanistan for the period ahead.

America and India

On the visit to India, I think the President and Prime Minister Singh agreed that it was historic—the high-water mark of U.S.–India relations since partition and since the creation of modern India and an independent India in 1947. This relationship is remarkably strong, remarkably diverse, and very broad. In essence, what we are trying to do in the U.S. government is to match the explosion, in a positive sense, of U.S.–India private-sector activities over the past decade, and American trade to India has tripled. United States Trade Representative Rob Portman, who was with President Bush on this visit, believes it may double again in the next several years. We now have a degree of business cooperation, trade, and investment in every possible sphere that we have never had with India.

We have in the Indian–American community 2 million people in this country. It is a very powerful example of a bridge between our two countries—a talented, successful immigrant group in the United States. And very importantly, because I'm here at Heritage, we now have a degree of connection between non-governmental organizations, think tanks, universities, and other organizations that we've never had before that provides a firm and very important foundation for relations between our two countries. What we in government have tried to do, what we in the Bush Administration have tried to do over the last five years, is essentially to build up the type of government-to-government relations with India that would match what is happening in the larger landscape between the American people and the Indian people.

We see India as a major strategic partner for our country. We see India as one of our most important partners worldwide, and we certainly see Indian interests and American interests increasingly intersecting in a number of areas.

For instance, in terms of our bilateral relationships, the President and Prime Minister Singh announced a major \$100 million agricultural fund designed to reconnect the land grant universities of the United States and our most important think tanks working in agriculture with the Indian technical institutes. You know that in the 1950s India produced a Green Revolution, with some assistance from people like Norman Borlaug and our land grant universities. Prime Minister Singh, who is from the Punjab region, has roughly 600 million–650 million people in his country who live on the land and who work in agriculture. He believes that it is time for a second Green Revolution and that we should try to recreate the institutional links, the private institutional links that produced that first one.

That is what this \$100 million project announced on Thursday in Delhi between the two governments seeks to do. It is to make the United States a big partner helping India on its next wave of agricultural modernization for this huge number of people—twice the number of people who live in our own country—who live on the land and work the land in India.

You saw the announcement of a major \$30 million project to try to link our two governments and institutes in science and technology research. There is a lot happening in science and technology in our private sectors through our corporations and universities, but the two governments need to focus the research, and we're going to do that.

You also saw an announcement on space cooperation; and you saw our intention to try to increase the number of American students in India, as well as Indian students in the United States. There are 85,000 Indians studying in the United States. That is the greatest number of foreign students in our country, and we find that to be a great strength for the future of the relationship. I think if you look at Prime Minister Singh's visit to Washington on the 18th of July, 2005, and President Bush's visit last week, we've announced, I think, something on the order of 18 joint venture agreements between the two governments in energy, in science and technology, in agriculture, in education, in space cooperation, in a number of fields designed to connect the two governments and the two peoples. This is a very important development.

U.S.–India Civil Nuclear Agreement

Of course, most of the attention on this trip went to the new civil nuclear agreement. We're very proud of this agreement. We believe it's good for the United States, and we're certain that it's good for India. Essentially, we are looking to bring India into the non-proliferation mainstream, and we're looking to increase the international inspection of India's nuclear facilities and the safeguards that would be applied by the International Atomic Energy Agency to India's civil nuclear power industry.

India has made a number of commitments to us in the agreement we reached on Thursday morning. India has agreed to place 14 of its 22 power reactors under international safeguards. That represents roughly 66 percent of its current capacity. India has also agreed that all of its future civil thermal and civil breeder reactors—all of them—will be put under safeguards as they are constructed.

India agreed as well that the safeguards to be put in place will be done in perpetuity, meaning these will be permanent safeguards. They are not safeguards that will be in place for a number of years and taken off at the convenience of the Indian government. They'll be permanently in place. India has agreed to extend its moratorium on nuclear testing. India has, of course, passed last June landmark export control legislation on weapons of mass destruction.

So in all these areas, we think that India has made commitments, not only to the United States in this plan it is putting forward today, but to the international community, which allow India for the very first time in the life of its nuclear program (over 30 years) to be able to submit itself in a transparent way for international inspection.

We think that's a major, major gain for the non-proliferation community. In return, what we in the United States—and what our friends and allies around the world—will do is to try to seek change through law, and we will ask the Congress to consider that. This will be up to the Congress. And we will ask the Nuclear Suppliers Group to adjust its practices so that civil trade on the part of all of our countries and our companies with India will in the future be possible—meaning investment in the nuclear power industry in India and the transfer of technology, which India has been lacking for the 30 years of its nuclear program.

We believe that in the future, India is going to face enormous energy needs. It's a country, as all of you know, of just over a billion people. It will soon be the most populous nation on earth. Its economy has been growing at a rate of 8 percent to 9 percent per year, and the forecasts are that it will continue or even increase in the years ahead. India, like China, has enormous civil, peaceful power needs. One of the ways that India hopes to address that need is to increase its civil nuclear power production. We understand that the vast growth in the future of the nuclear industry in India is going to be in civil nuclear power, with the construction of 1,000-megawatt power plants to help provide electricity to Indians in the cities and in the rural parts of the country.

So if you look at the agreement that we made with the Indian government, it's very likely that the great majority of the future growth will be on the civilian side. India has pledged that all of the thermal and breeder reactors that are civilian will come under safeguards, and we expect that the percentage of India's nuclear power industry that will eventually come under international safeguards is going to increase from that 66 percent figure to a figure much broader than that by the year 2020.

It's not up to me to announce India's intentions in this regard in terms of how many power plants will come on line. That's a function, a responsibility of the Indian government. But we're convinced that one of the most important aspects of this deal is not just how much India is offering to do today, but if you look at the future growth on the civilian side, an ever-increasing percentage of its nuclear industry will come under safeguards because the great majority of new construction will be and has to be, given the energy needs of the country in the civil nuclear field.

Obviously, this was an important part of what the President set out to do. The negotiations that we have with the Indian government extended from roughly last April, April 2005, until last Thursday. They were difficult negotiations, and as President Bush said in his press conference in Delhi on Thursday, we understand how difficult it was for the Indian government to come to this agreement. It was also difficult for us. After all, the United States very firmly believes in the Non-Proliferation Treaty. We will not recognize, as part of this deal, India as a nuclear weapons power. We are simply trying to make space for India in the international non-proliferation realm to bring them into the system so that they could, after 30 years of isolation, participate, gain the advantages of that system, but also submit themselves in a responsible way to oversight and to inspections and to transparency that the IAEA is going to demand. We think, on balance, that is a powerful move forward for India, for the United States, and for the world, and we're convinced that it's the right step forward.

What the President and Secretary Rice will be doing over the next week or two is to talk to Members of Congress, in the House and the Senate, to describe in some detail the arrangement that was negotiated just last week, and we will now respectfully submit a request to Congress that U.S. law might be changed so that American companies will be able to participate in the expansion of India's civil nuclear power facility.

The executive branch, in essence, has done the job we set out to do in negotiating and agreeing to this initiative. But in our system of government—and I think this is very well understood by the Indian public and by the Indian press—in our system of government, only Congress can change U.S. law. And so we hope very much to receive the support of the Congress. I wouldn't want to anticipate what the Congress will do. I think there's a respect for the separation of powers here, and we very much respect the role of Congress. We'll be trying to do the best job we can in convincing Congress this is a good deal for American interests.

Other Areas of Common Interest

Let me just say a word about what else is happening in the U.S.–India relationship.

There has been a remarkable expansion of our foreign policy cooperation between the two governments. You all know the history of the U.S.–India relationship going back to 1947. It was for many decades the ultimate unfulfilled relationship. India was the ultimate non-aligned country. We were, in many ways, the ultimate aligned country during the Cold War, and I think all of us, as we look from 1947 to the mid-1990s, felt a degree of frustration that in all those decades the United States and India never reached their potential for partnership in the world. But I'm sure that is what Prime Minister Nehru and President Truman had in mind the day that India became independent, and the United States was a strong supporter of Indian independence.

President Franklin Roosevelt spoke out publicly in favor of Indian independence during the Second World War, and we saw in the late 1940s a tremendous opportunity to form the kind of relationship with India that we have today, but it eluded us. There's no sense in going back over those five decades to debate why all that happened, but that was very much part of the backdrop to the President's visit and actually was part of the conversations.

I've been to India five times in the last six months as part of all these negotiations on these various bilateral initiatives, and it's striking to me how many times very senior Indian officials, as well as academics and journalists, would say to me, "Isn't it remarkable it's taken us 59 years to get to the point where India and America are global partners?" But we have gotten to that point, and in addition to the bilateral initiatives that I've laid out in a very general way—and there are a lot more that I haven't talked about—what is also remarkable now is the degree of coordination on global policies. In terms of democracy promotion, President Bush and Prime Minister Singh were the first two world leaders to stand up and support Kofi Annan's new initiative on democracy promotion worldwide—the first two countries to make a contribution, and in fact, Prime Minister Singh and President Bush inaugurated it together in New York in September.

In terms of global HIV/AIDS prevention, we have an HIV/AIDS problem in the United States, and so does India in its own country. We're now trying to join forces to combat that problem, not just in our two countries but worldwide, because we understand as two of the largest countries in the world, both democracies, that we have a mutual responsibility to help people in Africa and Asia and Latin America and other regions beyond South Asia and North America to deal with this problem.

In terms of foreign policy coordination in general, we see India as a major power in Asia and as a force for peace and for stability. Those aren't just words. When we look out over the landscape globally, we see India as one of our critical partners in preserving stability and peace, not just in South Asia but in all of Asia, in the future.

- We are working very closely with the Indian government, trying in the region to convince the parties in Sri Lanka to agree to the cease-fire and avoid a civil war.

- Both of us, I think, have been trying to work with the government in Bangladesh to cope with an increasingly aggressive, violent extremist movement. We've been very pleased to see over the last week two arrests of prominent violent Islamists by the Bangladeshi government.
- Both of us have been trying to give advice to the King of Nepal that he should open up his political system and return it to multi-party democracy, as well as obviously trying to cope with the very negative aspects and the violent aspects of a Maoist insurgency.

In all these areas, there's a degree of cooperation between India and the United States that simply didn't exist even a couple of years ago, and that's highly significant for the United States. It's good for our interests globally that we have a partner in India with which we can cooperate on a global basis.

India and Pakistan

Obviously, what we would like to see in South Asia is a good and constructive and peaceful relationship between India and Pakistan. Let me just finish this presentation by talking about the President's visit to Pakistan and a little bit about the relationship between India and Pakistan.

It's our firm hope that the composite dialogue between India and Pakistan is going to be successful and that those two countries are able to work out some of the bilateral differences in Indo-Pakistani relations, as well as differences over Kashmir that have been so much at the center of the troubles in South Asia for so many decades. As President Bush said repeatedly during his trip, we Americans don't see ourselves as a mediator between India and Pakistan on their bilateral differences, and certainly not on the issue of Kashmir. But you heard what the President said in his public remarks: We do hope for progress on Kashmir. We hope for progress in Indo-Pakistani relations. We hope that both countries will continue to have a responsible policy on the issue of nuclear weapons, and I think that the President had excellent discussions both with Prime Minister Singh on the one hand and with President Musharraf on the other.

Pakistan remains a very important partner and ally of the United States. The President was in Islamabad for about 24 hours. He spent the evening there Friday night; he spent all the day up until 11 p.m. on Saturday there. I think the discussions were excellent between the President and President Musharraf. You saw the press conference, so I won't go over the details except to say that obviously Pakistan is our most important partner in focusing on the struggle against al-Qaeda, as well as the Taliban, in Pakistan and along the Pakistan-Afghan border. Pakistan is critical to the stability of Afghanistan, so a lot of the conversation of course focused on those two areas.

We also believe that every effort should be made to build up a better economic and trade relationship between Pakistan and the United States, so we're hopeful that in the future we might be able to sign a bilateral investment treaty. We're hopeful that we'll be able to stimulate American investment in Pakistan, even in those parts of Pakistan that have been without job growth and so unstable: in Balochistan, in Waziristan, and the Northwest frontier provinces. We'd like to see whether the United States can be helpful to generate greater job growth and greater business activity in those regions. The discussion ranged across all those issues and many more.

We have a trusting, good relationship with the government of Pakistan. As the third country that the President visited in his trip, I think that if you put this all together, you see a renewed, very intensive American focus on South Asia. It's going to remain that way. We have a new Assistant Secretary of State for the region, Richard Boucher, who's just been confirmed by the U.S. Senate and who's now been in office, I think, for two weeks. He was also on the trip with President Bush, and I think his appointment is an indication of how important this region is to President Bush and Secretary Rice.

We have actually, on the bureaucratic side, just made his domain in that bureau larger. We've added the five countries of Central Asia—Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan—to that Bureau, so we now have a combined unified American look at both Central Asia and South Asia. We see a future of economic trade, investment, and infrastructure links among all those countries, the five in Central Asia, and particularly with Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India in the northern part of the region. That ought to mean a critical difference and a positive difference in the long term.

I want to say in conclusion that we are very pleased by the outcome of what the President has tried to do, and we're looking forward very much to discussions with the Congress on the civil nuclear deal. We're convinced of the importance of this region to our country and are very gratified that in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan we have three excellent partners with which to work.

Talking Points

- American interests in South Asia are now at the core of what we are trying to do in the world. Trying to achieve stability in Afghanistan, trying to create a better, stronger, deeper strategic partnership with India, and continuing priority discussions with Pakistan on counterterrorism are all in America's interest.
- The countries of South Asia are of critical importance to American interests in the world, as well as American values in the world.
- In key areas, a degree of cooperation between India and the United States exists that did not exist even a couple of years ago, and that is highly significant for the United States. It is good for our interests globally that we have a partner in India with which we can cooperate on a global basis.

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