

## Manmohan Singh Visits Washington: Sustaining U.S.–Indian Cooperation Amid Differences

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### SUMMARY

When India's Prime Minister Manmohan Singh comes to Washington for the Obama administration's first state visit, the White House should seize the moment to make a bold announcement: that the United States supports India's permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Additionally, the United States and India can cooperate along several dimensions:

- **NONPROLIFERATION:** India's integration into the global nonproliferation regime remains incomplete, and the United States should therefore work toward incorporating India into key nonproliferation institutions. India, in turn, should use its influence to convince Iran to meet its nonproliferation obligations, while continuing to work with the Obama administration to meet various common disarmament objectives.
- **CLIMATE CHANGE:** Until India is ready to move toward legal commitments on controlling emissions, the United States can still work with India bilaterally, particularly through the inauguration of a "green development" initiative that expands cooperation in agriculture, energy, industry, transportation, infrastructure, and regulation, which would help reduce rising Indian emissions. In his upcoming meeting with Singh, President Obama should promote practical initiatives to mitigate climate change, rather than adherence to a multilateral treaty.

During Singh's visit, both countries will likely announce many new programs in areas such as agriculture, climate change, counterterrorism, defense, education, energy, healthcare, space, and trade and investment. These efforts, reflecting the expanding web of bilateral interactions, personify the emerging dominance of ordinariness in U.S.–Indian relations, which could potentially be the partnership's hidden strength—if both sides take care to understand and accommodate the critical issues of high politics that matter in Washington and New Delhi.

India's prime minister, Manmohan Singh, will come to Washington on November 24, 2009, for the first state visit hosted by President Barack Obama. This event will be widely viewed as evidence of the importance attached to maintaining the upward trajectory in U.S.–Indian relations. By all accounts,

the two leaders have already established a good working relationship—something skeptics feared was impossible given the prime minister's warm regard for President George W. Bush and the differences between Bush and Obama on many issues involving India. The global economic crisis, however, appears



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to have enhanced the personal collaboration between the two leaders, as many of Singh's ideas for stimulating the global revival have been backed by Obama in various forums, including most recently at the Group of Twenty's summit in Pittsburgh.

Both the United States and India will therefore seek to use Singh's forthcoming visit to showcase the promise of bilateral cooperation and to foster enhanced partnership in the five key areas agreed upon earlier this year—strategic cooperation; energy and climate change; education and development; economics, trade, and agriculture; science and technology, health, and innovation (as described in Policy Brief 81). Despite these good intentions, however, the Obama administration is concerned that this visit may be unfavorably compared with the last summit between the two heads of government when, on July 18, 2005, President Bush and Prime Minister Singh stunned the international community with their agreement on civilian nuclear cooperation. That deal undoubtedly galvanized the bilateral relationship, cemented personal ties between the two leaders, and focused global attention on the growing geopolitical convergence between Washington and New Delhi.

The Obama team is understandably looking for something that could match the July 2005 visit both to avoid odious comparisons and to demonstrate that the desire for a strengthened partnership is grounded ultimately in national interests rather than merely the preferences of any one president. Toward that end, the White House is searching for an initiative capable of capturing the president's interest in solidifying the growing ties between the world's oldest and largest democracies.

For such a boost, the administration might consider the following: during Singh's visit, Obama should declare American support for India's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. In doing so, Washington would not only build on the recent history of private conversations and public intimations regarding this issue, but it would also join Paris, Moscow, and London in adopting this position. This announcement would, furthermore, be utterly consistent with the president's own emphasis on multilateralism, and would acknowledge a reality that on current trends is simply inevitable, providing Washington with the diplomatic advantages of supporting New Delhi well before its membership became inescapable. As Martin Wolf has trenchantly noted, "Within a decade, a world in which the United Kingdom is on the United Nations Security Council and India is not will seem beyond laughable. The old order passes. The sooner the world adjusts, the better."

President Obama can lead this adjustment to global realities by making this announcement. Although it would have no short-term practical consequence, it would provide the benefits in "atmospherics" sought from Prime Minister Singh's visit, even as the administration focuses on encouraging further Indian cooperation on the key issues prioritized by the United States: climate change, nuclear nonproliferation, and economic and defense cooperation. Although opportunities and challenges exist in all these areas, there are fewer showstoppers in the last two (boxes 1 and 2). Consequently, this Policy Brief focuses substantially on climate change and nonproliferation, where the tests facing the bilateral relationship are most significant.

*This Policy Brief, the second in a two-part series focusing on U.S.–Indian relations, focuses on the issues that President Obama has identified as his administration's priorities: climate change, nuclear nonproliferation, and economic and defense cooperation. The first brief evaluated the potential for improved bilateral cooperation in the context of Indian perceptions of Washington's policy toward New Delhi.*

## Climate Change

There is no doubt that discussions about climate change will feature prominently in conversations between Obama and Singh at the White House, if for no other reason than the need to secure some measure of success at the global climate change summit in Copenhagen in December. Current U.S. and Indian objectives regarding climate change converge mainly on generalities, and their strategies for dealing

with this threat are still far apart. Both nations agree that rising carbon emissions spell disaster for the planet, especially for developing countries because of their location in higher-risk parts of the world, greater dependence on agriculture, and relatively lower economic and institutional resilience. Both states also concur that climate change cannot be rectified at the cost of economic growth because growth in the broadest sense provides many

## BOX 1 U.S.–Indian Economic Cooperation

U.S.–Indian economic cooperation is diverse, spans both the private sector and government, and involves substantial trade in both goods and services. The pattern of interaction, however, is asymmetrical: The United States is India's second-largest trading partner, while India remains only a low eighteenth in comparison. Though official discussions are intended to expand the level and density of mutual trade, the single most important driver shaping this outcome is not bilateral but domestic: the pace and character of India's economic reforms. Four key issues now dominate discussions about bilateral economic cooperation:

**THE DOHA ROUND OF MULTILATERAL TRADE NEGOTIATIONS.** The global economic crisis and Prime Minister Singh's return to power with a comfortable majority have motivated India to launch a renewed effort to salvage the Doha Round, which is concerned particularly with development issues. As a net exporter of agricultural goods and as a producer whose subsidies are already below the permitted ceilings, India's interests diverge from those of the world's poorest countries. Consequently, delinking India's negotiating position from that of the Group of Thirty-Three, along with further internal economic liberalization, offer fresh opportunities to break the impasse. In any event, India's current

attitude toward Doha reflects a new urgency that increases the prospects for bilateral cooperation, but the problem currently may be more Washington than New Delhi.

**BILATERAL INVESTMENT TREATY.** Although many argue that the endpoint of U.S.–Indian economic cooperation ought to be a free trade agreement, political realities have compelled both countries to strive for a more limited goal. Ongoing negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty are aiming to encourage, promote, and protect each country's investments in the other. The final pact will likely cover such issues as acceptable national treatment, the adjudication of claims and rights, and protections against expropriation. Both countries are hopeful that the treaty can be concluded this year.

**BILATERAL TRADE LIBERALIZATION.** Discussions pertaining to bilateral trade liberalization span a huge gamut of subjects and are all intimately connected to India's ongoing economic reform. Three broad categories of effort stand out: securing American access to the Indian market in areas where U.S. firms are currently prohibited, such as agriculture, dairy goods, and multibrand retailing; increasing access to the Indian market in areas where U.S. presence is

currently permitted but at low levels, such as insurance, banking, and defense production; and improving commercial protection for U.S. goods and services available in India through better intellectual property rights enforcement, copyright protection, and improved standards. A unique private-sector complement to these endeavors is the CEO Forum, whereby ten Indian and American chief executives provide advice to both governments on policy reform.

### LIBERALIZING HIGH-TECHNOLOGY TRADE.

Although the U.S.–Indian civilian nuclear cooperation initiative, in principle, removed many American obstacles to nuclear trade with India, there are still many constraints to securing U.S. licenses for controlled high technology or dual-use technology. These difficulties arise partly because bureaucratic reforms in Washington have not kept pace with the dramatic changes occurring at the policy level and also because bilateral instruments assuring the U.S. government that Indian importers would only seek such technologies licitly and would guard against their misuse or unauthorized reexport are often not yet in place. Current discussions are aimed at securing an agreement that would rectify these problems in order to accelerate the pace of high-technology trade.

of the instruments for constraining emissions and, particularly in poorer countries, remains a critical vehicle for defeating poverty and preserving political and social stability.

Beyond the recognition of these problems, however, U.S. and Indian divergences appear in sharp relief. The United States generally has been reluctant to accept binding carbon emissions caps as long as the developing world—and especially its late industrializers, such as

China and India—does not reciprocate. In other words, to best resolve the problem of climate change, which requires global collective action, all nations must contribute by accepting enforceable emissions control targets that ideally would be codified through an international agreement. Although New Delhi accepts that developing countries like China and India remain among the largest emitters of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>)—China ranks first

## BOX 2 U.S.–Indian Defense Cooperation

After almost forty years of minimal interaction, the U.S.–Indian defense relationship has dramatically expanded in ways that were hard to imagine even a decade ago. India welcomes defense cooperation with the United States because it provides political reassurance and access to sophisticated technology and enables improved operational proficiency. Washington has invested in the defense relationship with New Delhi because it remains an effective way to strengthen Indian power, secure access to the Indian military market, and improve the prospects for future joint operations. The U.S.–Indian defense relationship plays out today along three broad dimensions:

**MILITARY-TO-MILITARY RELATIONS.** The most conspicuous achievements thus far in defense cooperation have been in the area of bilateral exercises, personnel exchanges, high-level and unit visits, military education and training, and officer and unit exchanges. The objective of these multifarious activities has been to increase mutual familiarity between the armed forces on both sides in order to advance toward the goal of interoperability, which will be essential if the two militaries need to “combine arms” in future peace and stability missions. U.S.–Indian military exercises today are regular, involve all war-fighting arms, and implicate major military formations

on both sides—interactions that will be made even easier once New Delhi signs the Logistics Support Agreement, which would rationalize the costs borne by each country. All military interactions are overseen by separate service steering groups, which ultimately report to the Defense Policy Group cochaired by the U.S. undersecretary of defense for policy and the Indian defense secretary.

**DEFENSE TRADE.** After a shaky beginning and primarily because of fears at the Indian end about American supplier reliability, U.S.–Indian defense trade has picked up slowly. During the last decade, significant Indian defense purchases from the United States included a large amphibious warfare vessel, C-130J special operations aircraft, and the P-8I maritime patrol aircraft. Major prospective competitions where U.S. suppliers are favored include the 126 Multi-Role Combat Aircraft deal, the acquisition of strategic transport and airborne early warning aircraft, and Indian naval network modernization. Many of these acquisitions, however, will require India to sign the Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement, which has now been pending for several years. Rising Indian defense purchases from American vendors are in any event likely to become common in the years ahead.

### DEFENSE INDUSTRIAL COLLABORATION.

Defense industrial collaboration has thus far been the weakest part of the bilateral defense relationship. The problems here are legion. Although India has opened up its public-sector defense industry to foreign direct investment up to a limit of 26 percent of equity, American defense companies thus far have been less than enthusiastic about investing because these levels are too low to warrant serious expressions of commitment. Indian offset policies also are burdensome and have had the effect of soliciting U.S. interest in industrial collaboration only to the degree that they help secure defense sales. For the foreseeable future, therefore, defense industrial collaboration will occur mainly through coproduction requirements associated with major acquisitions or through niche investments. In this context, the U.S.–India Joint Technology Group and the U.S.–India Defense Procurement and Production Group have made some efforts to promote collaborative defense research, development, and production, as well as to streamline acquisition, but both endeavors have so far borne only modest fruit.

and India fourth in annual CO<sub>2</sub> emissions—it has, following Beijing's lead, nonetheless rejected the U.S. demand for accepting binding caps on multiple grounds.

For starters, India has argued that because past emissions by the developed world have been the principal cause of climate change—more than three-fourths of the cumulative anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> today can be traced to the developed world—the richer states ought to make “supernormal” contributions by cutting their own greenhouse gases more substantially, meaning by 25 to 40 percent of their 1990 levels by 2020. Further, Indian policy makers note that when CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are judged not on an aggregate but on a per capita basis, India's emissions are relatively insignificant, in large part because 300 to 400 million Indians still lack electricity. Consequently, although India emitted close to 1,300 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> in 2006, its per capita emissions were a meager 1.16 tons, the lowest share of the twenty largest emitters. Chinese per capita emissions, in contrast, are almost four times larger than India's (and closer to the global average), whereas comparable U.S. values are more than seventeen times greater than India's. Finally, New Delhi points out that the energy intensity of India's gross domestic product (GDP) has progressively fallen—from 0.30 kilogram of oil equivalent per GDP dollar (at purchasing power parity) in 1980 to 0.16 kilogram in 2005—unlike those of many other nations. These values not only compare favorably with the most energy-efficient countries in the developed world—only Japan, the United Kingdom, and Denmark have lower intensities—but are also expected to fall further as India's energy markets mature with continuing reforms.

Consequently, New Delhi has concluded that although India's annual aggregate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions will rise from about 1.4 billion tons in 2008 to between 4 and 7 billion tons by 2031, the country's per capita emissions will grow only marginally during the next two decades, despite its continuing high levels of

economic growth. An official summary of several detailed modeling exercises conducted by private research organizations and international consulting firms notes that India's per capita CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent emissions—when computed as an average across multiple studies—will rise to 2.1 tons in 2020 and to 3.5 tons in 2030. These figures are not only well below the current per capita world average but also under those of the developed countries, even if they were to meet the most ambitious emissions reduction targets currently being discussed. These relatively slow increases in per capita emissions derive from the assumption that India's energy intensity will continue to drop, the concerted push toward renewable energy and nonfossil fuel sources now under way will be sustained, demand-side energy management strategies will bear fruit, and new market and regulatory mechanisms will be effective in shaping national choices.

Taking into account these and related factors, one widely cited Indian study, published in the journal *Current Science*, concludes that although India's carbon emissions “are projected to grow further to meet the national developmental needs, the absolute level of greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 will be below 5 per cent of global emissions and the per capita emissions will still be low compared to most of the developed countries as well as the global average.”

On the basis of such judgments, Jairam Ramesh, India's minister of state for the environment and forests, has asserted that “there is simply no case for the pressure that we ... face to actually reduce emissions.” Given India's enormous development challenges—at least 300 million live in absolute poverty—the desire to avoid doing anything that sacrifices economic growth is understandable. Yet this seeming pugnacity is counterproductive, because the failure to mitigate the effects of climate change will not only affect India's deprived millions more than most but it also obscures the fact that economic progress and environmentally sustainable development are

eminently compatible. In fact, the Singh government, operating on this very assumption—for which it has received little credit because attention has been diverted by the shrill Indian opposition to binding carbon emissions caps—has begun to unilaterally implement an immense national agenda, ranging from large-scale reforestation to improving energy efficiency to increasing investment in renewable and nonfossil energy sources to

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planning domestic carbon-trading programs. Through such initiatives, the Singh government is attempting to diminish the expected increase in emissions through its own efforts, even as it pleads for international assistance so that India can reduce greenhouse gases still further without sacrificing economic growth.

However, India can clearly do more to arrest its CO<sub>2</sub> emissions growth—and should do more, if for no other reason than its self-interest. Although its per capita increase in emissions over time may be smaller than those of most nations, its still-growing population makes its aggregate emissions significant. That is the bad news. But this projected total could be cut, as one detailed study by McKinsey and Company points out, by some 30 to 50 percent if India can reduce its energy consumption in five key sectors of the economy. Such improvements, however, will not come cheaply and would cost more than a trillion dollars, or 2 percent of India's GDP, during the next two decades. The Indian state is already moving—slowly—in this direction, and it is both ironic and emblematic of Indian democracy that Ramesh, even as he aggressively argues abroad that India will not undertake any binding commitments with respect to climate change, has been the strongest advocate within his

government for India committing unilaterally and unconditionally to CO<sub>2</sub> reductions as a way of “doing well by doing good.” The end result of this internal debate is that India is likely to end up even closer to China on climate change mitigation than it is today.

What, then, can Obama expect of Singh in their conversations about cooperation on climate change? The president will likely make the case for India accepting binding caps as part of an eventual global agreement, but there is now a broad consensus that such an accord cannot be reached at Copenhagen. In part, this is because all countries are currently locked into a rational but quite unproductive game of “after you, Alphonse,” with each waiting for the others to accept difficult obligations first. President Obama is particularly handicapped in this regard. Although he has shifted course on climate change vis-à-vis his predecessor, he will be arriving at Copenhagen with a weak hand. The position endorsed by the U.S. House of Representatives—but not yet by the Senate—presumes that all nations will agree to national CO<sub>2</sub> emissions goals and codify them through a binding international agreement, which would then permit carbon trading internationally. Because, at the moment, this approach is unlikely to secure multilateral consent, the United States will probably be unable to convince other states to negotiate a universally binding treaty, even if many of these countries are already independently implementing domestic climate change policies. India clearly falls into this category.

The U.S. government recognizes these realities. If Obama therefore focuses mainly on persuading Singh to commit to binding CO<sub>2</sub> emissions caps, bilateral cooperation will prove elusive. If, conversely, he concentrates on the objective of arresting climate change—rather than on treaties, the currently preferred U.S. instrument for attaining this goal—the possibilities for mutual cooperation are endless. Washington would even come out ahead if it just focuses on achieving five broad objectives, if necessary through a bilateral memorandum

of understanding: first, assisting New Delhi to better understand, through cooperative research and analysis, the implications of an Indian “business as usual” growth trajectory on climate change, and the positive national and global effects of unilateral and multilateral remedial responses (as well as their costs); second, encouraging India to publicly articulate meaningful national emissions targets unilaterally, even if New Delhi is not yet ready to enter into a binding multilateral agreement; third, securing an Indian commitment to participate in international audits of its domestic initiatives regarding climate change; fourth, identifying and increasing access (via markets and international aid) to priority technologies that would significantly arrest Indian emissions growth; and, fifth, working with India to reorient existing multilateral institutions to increase environmentally sustainable investments worldwide, while creating new mechanisms for the independent review and adjudication of various national initiatives related to emissions abatement.

If these objectives can be promoted by President Obama in his discussions with Prime Minister Singh, the United States and India will have put in place valuable mechanisms that *actually* mitigate climate change, even if the two countries otherwise continue to disagree about treaties as a solution to the problem. It is worth bearing in mind that whatever New Delhi’s public position may be today on accepting obligatory emissions cuts, this stance is by no means unalterable. Rather, it will change depending on Indian perceptions of the evolving international consensus, the commitments made by other nations, and the availability of benefits that may be eventually integrated into a formal agreement. Until India is ready to move toward legal commitments, however, much can still be done bilaterally in the areas of agriculture, energy, industry, transportation, infrastructure, and regulation, which will tangibly reduce Indian emissions even if all that is initially agreed to at Copenhagen is a broad framework agreement

with no legally binding components. In fact, there may be no better legacy that Obama can bequeath to the bilateral relationship—and one that could rival Bush’s civilian nuclear agreement—than a substantial initiative to encourage “green development” that, encompassing cooperation in all these sectors, makes a lasting contribution to responsible Indian growth.

### Nuclear Nonproliferation

The renewed emphasis on nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament in the Obama administration makes this a new subject for bilateral discussions. This is an issue area where U.S. and Indian positions traditionally

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have been sharply opposed and the cause of much grief during the last thirty years. The Bush administration eliminated the most difficult source of discord through its civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with New Delhi, but India’s integration into the global nonproliferation regime still remains incomplete. Several issues related to the Obama’s administration’s nonproliferation and disarmament agenda will dominate bilateral discussions during the remainder of the president’s term, and some of these could surface in the president’s conversations with Singh.

The first and most pressing problem currently crowding the nonproliferation agenda is the threat posed by the Iranian and the North Korean nuclear programs. Both challenges imperil the United States and India, but New Delhi has a greater role to play in managing the Iranian situation. Both the United States and India agree that Tehran’s surreptitious acquisition of enrichment technologies contravenes its safeguards obligations

to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which is a violation of Article II of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). They also agree that Iran's persistence with uranium enrichment and its activities related to weapons design confirm its strategic goal of acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities.

Yet there are important differences between the U.S. and Indian approaches to the challenge of Iran. Because Washington has had no worthwhile political relations with Tehran since the Iranian revolution, it has treated Iran mainly as a target of coercive diplomacy, an approach that has only been reinforced by the

solutions such as exporting Iran's enriched uranium for further processing abroad were to conclusively collapse). Whether this will succeed is unclear. Indian officials are skeptical that Iran will agree to any cessation of enrichment immediately but hope that other alternatives can be found to create breathing room for Iran to comply gracefully. In any event, India recognizes the need for continued pressure in the context of a broader engagement between Tehran and Washington. For good measure, Obama administration officials have begun a quiet conversation with their Indian counterparts about cooperating to curb Iranian nuclear ambitions. Washington's immediate goal is to persuade New Delhi to use its influence to convince Tehran to stay engaged with the Obama administration (and the international community) to reach a peaceful resolution.

India will have no difficulty performing this role, which is eminently compatible with its own objectives and interests; but whether it has the persuasive powers attributed to it by some in the United States remains an open question. Longer-term U.S. expectations center on the hope that India will cooperate with the international community in tightening the economic and political noose around Iran if the current dialogue does not produce a diplomatic solution. Depending on the coercive instruments involved and the international mandate under which they are employed, Indian cooperation may prove more difficult—but it is not impossible. The history of the Bush presidency demonstrates that India can cooperate with the United States in many situations when the two nations have differing interests, as long as India is convinced that there is a broader strategic convergence between Washington and New Delhi, and that its own actions can be implemented quietly and inconspicuously. The current discussions with India on Iran should focus on these considerations.

Beyond Iran, the U.S. administration's nonproliferation agenda involves strengthening the NPT itself, including by expanding

Iranian regime's support for terrorism in the Middle East and its odious attitude toward Israel. India, in contrast, has long historical and civilizational ties with Iran, and although the two countries have never been particularly close politically, Iran remains a significant source of energy for India. In particular, their interests converge on opposing the Taliban in Afghanistan. Consequently, New Delhi, like many other U.S. allies, has been compelled to walk a tightrope vis-à-vis Tehran: Although it has opposed Tehran's illicit nuclear activities, including by twice voting against Iran in the IAEA's Board of Governors, it has been careful not to let this targeted opposition provoke a larger meltdown in bilateral relations.

At the moment, India is being called upon to do little directly to combat the Iranian nuclear program. The Obama administration is engaged in a major international effort to secure another UN Security Council resolution that will impose further sanctions on Iran if it fails to comply with past resolutions to suspend enrichment activities (or if other temporizing

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the larger regime, even as the United States recommits more energetically to comprehensive nuclear disarmament. This expansion takes many forms—including limiting the spread of enrichment and reprocessing technology, creating multilateral fuel banks, emphasizing negative security assurances, reaffirming the goal of NPT universality, constraining opportunities for NPT withdrawal, and enlarging zones free of nuclear weapons. The renewal of disarmament efforts focuses on concluding treaty-driven reductions in U.S. and Russian nuclear forces, bringing the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force, concluding a fissile-material cutoff treaty, and eventually implementing total multilateral nuclear abolition. The ambitiousness of this agenda is breathtaking, and whether or not it is completed successfully, every individual component involves New Delhi in some way, thus ensuring that nonproliferation and disarmament issues will reappear significantly in U.S.–Indian relations. This is not necessarily a bad thing, because the United States and India share many nonproliferation objectives and India's slow integration into the international nuclear order has created fresh incentives for collaboratively creating what Indian officials have called “a new nonproliferation consensus.”

The Bush administration's civilian nuclear initiative was intended to bring India from the wilderness into the mainstream of the global nuclear order. Despite the initiative's success, India ended up mainly in limbo. This status has undeniably provided New Delhi with many new opportunities—and hence it is an improvement—but India's as-yet-anomalous status within the NPT leaves both the United States and India still grappling with many unresolved contradictions. For example, the repeated U.S. calls for NPT universality, although only a ritual incantation in Washington meant to reassure other non-nuclear-weapon states that are signatories to the NPT, provoke sharp—and often needless—Indian protests. Most of these disputes,

thankfully, are insignificant. As for other issues such as reprocessing consent rights, on which there were at first real fears in New Delhi about the Obama administration's intentions, the progress made could actually permit both sides—with a little hard work—to conclude a satisfactory agreement in the near

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future. Though this is undoubtedly a promising portent, there are more serious disagreements on many components of the Obama agenda detailed above—none of which can be analyzed here for reasons of space—with the brewing problem of the CTBT likely to be the most difficult.

It is uncertain whether Obama will have a focused conversation with Singh on the CTBT during this visit, because it is still unclear whether the U.S. Senate will actually ratify the treaty. The sharp challenges posed by the CTBT for the bilateral relationship—if Senate ratification occurs, however—will not go away, and this appears to be one issue on which agreement between Washington and New Delhi could prove to be difficult. Obama seeks CTBT ratification to foreclose renewed nuclear testing on the part of all states, which he sees as a useful constraint on those that might in the future acquire nuclear weapons and seek to test them, either to demonstrate technical competence or to gain prestige in the eyes of their own people or their neighbors. The CTBT has also long been viewed as an intermediate point on the road to complete disarmament.

Many in New Delhi, however, believe that although the CTBT will not prevent the development of new nuclear weapons or the rise of new nuclear states—critical impediments to the objective of comprehensive abolition—it

will nevertheless unacceptably undermine Indian security at a time when the nation's own nuclear deterrent is still immature; when the effectiveness of its advanced weapon designs are still contested; when its principal rivals, Pakistan and China, continue to modernize and expand their own nuclear forces; and when renewed technical collaboration between these two rivals cannot be ruled out. To complicate things even further, the Indian officials who hold such views do not believe that other international movements toward disarmament—such as a U.S.–Russian strategic arms reduction treaty or more national

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ratifications of the CTBT, including by Beijing—would effectively mitigate the specific threats emanating from China and Pakistan to their security, at least for some time to come.

Consequently, India would find it difficult to sign the CTBT in current circumstances, creating the real prospect that the treaty will never come into force, even if President Obama can convince the Senate to consent to its ratification. The sterility of the CTBT was not at all inevitable when the instrument was being negotiated, except for the fact that Washington then consented to a Russian, British, and Chinese stratagem that eventually made its entry into force dependent—for the first time—on securing the consent of forty-four specific states, at least some of which were clearly reluctant to sign it. Because the CTBT goes to the heart of the efficacy of India's nuclear deterrent, New Delhi is unlikely to oblige Washington any time soon by formally acceding to the treaty, even though it will indefinitely maintain its unilateral moratorium on testing nuclear weaponry.

Further, the only two “workarounds” that could convince India to contemplate legal compliance with the CTBT—renewed nuclear testing preceding signing, or access to sophisticated nuclear weapons design simulation-and-validation capabilities from advanced nuclear states—are either politically destabilizing or illegal and could undermine Obama's larger disarmament objectives anyway. If current trends—particularly those related to ongoing Chinese and Pakistani nuclear expansion—therefore continue to hold, an open-ended moratorium on nuclear testing is the best Obama will likely get from India. Though this is no doubt better than other imaginable alternatives, it will nonetheless frustrate the administration's goal of institutionalizing a binding proscription of nuclear testing.

Strengthening nuclear security, another policy objective that strongly motivates Obama, will require more work on the part of both Washington and New Delhi, but it offers the promise of good bilateral cooperation. Although the nuclear security summit scheduled to occur next year is intended primarily to obtain universal commitment to protecting all nuclear materials and their associated infrastructure because of the growing threats of misuse, theft, and terrorism, the Indian atomic energy establishment has traditionally been somewhat cool to the idea of engaging in any public discussions on this subject for fear of compromising the nation's nuclear weapons program. These fears, however, are misplaced. For the longest time, it has been India's civilian leaders, starting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and now continuing with Prime Minister Singh, who have been most concerned about nuclear security worldwide, and especially in Pakistan. President Obama's forthcoming nuclear security initiative, then, provides a golden opportunity for the United States and India to collaborate in developing a set of universal nuclear security standards that would benefit both states as well as all others. Success here, however, would require Indian leaders to calm the anxieties of their nuclear establish-

ment and engage vigorously with Washington to produce tangible results—an outcome that is certainly possible given Obama's and Singh's strong convictions on this subject.

On other more distant objectives, current U.S. and Indian policies are in even stronger accord. For example, on the fissile-material cutoff treaty, New Delhi's position, which was opposed to that of the Bush administration, is completely in sync with the Obama team's view of the need for a strongly verifiable treaty. On nuclear disarmament as well, whatever its complaints about the recent UN Security Council resolution piloted by Obama, India cheers his commitment to seeking the abolition of all nuclear weaponry, having consistently proposed a nuclear weapons convention as the means for achieving this goal.

Although such convergence is welcome, both countries can immediately do much more to strengthen the larger nonproliferation order. Potential Indian contributions include joining the Proliferation Security Initiative (thus formalizing its own hitherto impressive contributions to the effort to interdict trade in weapons of mass destruction); working to construct a new outer space security regime; supporting any future international efforts to bring the CTBT into force, even if New Delhi abstains from formal adherence; and supporting the creation of multilateral fuel banks under the aegis of the IAEA. Potential U.S. contributions include creating an international consensus to continue integrating India into various nonproliferation institutions—such as the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, and the Zangger Committee—to increase New Delhi's stakes in the current regime.

### **Toward a More Normal Relationship?**

Unlike Prime Minister Singh's 2005 trip to Washington, when he and President Bush together removed one of the key structural impediments to improved bilateral ties, his forthcoming visit will highlight the maturing of this relationship. This maturing will be

exemplified by the many initiatives likely to be launched in such diverse areas as agriculture, climate change, counterterrorism, defense, education, energy, healthcare, space, and trade and investment. Like other American partnerships with major nations, U.S.–Indian

**U.S.–Indian relations today exemplify an expanding web of interactions in issue areas where both agreement and disagreement persist to varying degrees. This dominance of ordinariness could potentially be the partnership's hidden strength.**

relations today exemplify an expanding web of interactions in numerous issue areas where both agreement and disagreement persist to varying degrees. This dominance of ordinariness could potentially be the partnership's hidden strength—if both sides take care to understand and accommodate the critical issues of high politics that matter in Washington and New Delhi. This process could be challenging, because although neither side threatens any vital interest of the other, the United States and India are at different levels of economic achievement and strategic capacity.

Consequently, even when the two nations' overarching goals converge, there could be significant divergences in operational objectives along with competing strategies to realize these objectives, both of which would need to be managed appropriately. Yet, if Prime Minister Singh's forthcoming visit enables both sides to sustain their engagement despite these differences, it will have made an enduring contribution, even if it fails to produce any attention-grabbing headlines this time around. ■

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## RESOURCES

Visit [www.CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs](http://www.CarnegieEndowment.org/pubs) for these and other publications.

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