

**Remarks by Senator John McCain
At the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace
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Thank you, Ashley [Tellis], for that kind introduction. And thank you for your counsel and friendship. I always benefit immensely from our conversations.

I'm very grateful that Ashley and the leadership of the Carnegie Endowment have asked me here today to be a part of their ongoing discussion of the U.S.-India relationship. You have heard from a host of distinguished U.S. and Indian leaders and thinkers, and I am honored to speak about this critical foreign policy priority.

The emergence of a strategic partnership with India has been one of the most consequential bipartisan successes of recent U.S. foreign policy. It began with President Bill Clinton's historic visit to India in 2000. It grew exponentially with President George W. Bush's strategic decision to invest America's global influence in the propulsion of India's rise to power—a decision that reached its fullest expression in the groundbreaking civilian nuclear agreement. Our new partnership with India has been consistently affirmed, sustained, and broadened by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in Congress. And with the President set to arrive in New Delhi tomorrow, the potential to expand our partnership is immense.

Of course, our progress to date would have been inconceivable without the strategic vision and political courage of many Indian leaders, especially Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Prime Minister literally risked his government and his political life to achieve the civil-nuclear agreement, and he has never wavered in the fight to defend his vision of a partnership with the United States—doing so in a democratic arena that can make American politics appear tame by comparison.

On our side, Tuesday's election was a reminder, as if we needed one, that Americans will always have plenty to fight about. But I am pleased that the U.S.-India relationship hasn't been one of them. We need to keep it that way. We need to continue to elevate our partnership with India above the political fray, because its potential benefits are just too important—to America, to India, and to the world.

The rationale for seeking closer relations with India is powerful: India will soon become the world's most populous nation. It has a young and increasingly skilled workforce that will soon lead India to become the world's fastest growing economy and ultimately one of the biggest. It is a nuclear power and possesses the world's second-largest military, which is increasingly capable and technologically

sophisticated. It shares strategic interests with America, on issues as diverse and vital as defeating terrorism and extremism and shaping the rise of China, securing the global supply of energy and developing new sources of it, sustaining global economic growth and strengthening geopolitical trends that favor open societies.

Most importantly, India and the United States share common values: certainly the values of human rights, individual liberty, and democratic limits on state power, but also the values of our societies—creativity and critical thinking, risk-taking and entrepreneurialism, tolerance and social mobility—values that continue to deepen the interdependence of our peoples across every field of human endeavor. It is for this reason that we are confident that the ongoing rise of democratic India as a great power—whether tomorrow or 25 years from now—will be peaceful, and thus can advance critical U.S. national interests.

Furthermore, it is because of our shared values that we view the rise of India as inherently good in itself. At a time when many have become enamored with an authoritarian model of state capitalism and its ability to generate wealth and power, there can be no greater demonstration that political pluralism, free markets, and the rule of law are a morally and materially superior way to organize diverse societies than the success of democratic India. Who can believe in “Asian values” or doubt the universality of democratic capitalism in a world where India exists? Therefore, contrary to the old dictates of *realpolitik*, we seek not to limit or diminish India’s rise, but to bolster and catalyze it—economically, geopolitically, and yes, militarily. In short, the United States has a compelling stake in the success of India.

The question for both countries, then, is where do we go from here? It is a question that still calls out for an answer. Our top priority during the past decade was resolving the key issues that once divided us, primarily India’s unique nuclear status and the bilateral tensions it created. This was a prerequisite for transforming U.S.-India relations. It was a test of whether our two countries could do something really hard and historic together, and we did it. Yes, there are still obstacles to finalizing our civil-nuclear cooperation, but I am confident we can resolve them. As a result, the United States and India can now focus less inwardly and more outwardly, less on how to settle the past and more on how to shape the future.

To unleash the full potential of our partnership, we must resist the forces that would turn our strategic relationship into a transactional one—one defined not by what we do together but by what concessions we extract from one another. We must also resist the temptation to lose our strategic focus by failing to set priorities. The virtue of the U.S.-India relationship is its breadth. It spans issues of trade and

development, agriculture and education, energy and health and many other issues. These are all important matters, not least because they foster America's global competitiveness and India's rise to power. But the real leaders on this front are our people, who have been and will remain far out ahead of our governments. The role of our public sphere, then, is to remove every obstacle that stands between the continued collaboration of our dynamic societies and private sectors. With proper guidance and political will, this is largely a technical matter, not a strategic one.

If the United States and India are to forge a truly strategic partnership, our senior leaders in government must prioritize two areas of cooperation above all: security and values—in short, the creation of geopolitical conditions that secure and expand the community of countries that value political and economic freedom. What this means in practice is that, while respecting one another's independence as equal and sovereign partners, India and the United States should increasingly align our policies and our instruments of national power to achieve three strategic goals:

- first, to shape the development of South Asia as a region of sovereign, democratic states that contribute to one another's security and prosperity.
- second, to create a preponderance of power in the Asia-Pacific region that favors free societies, free markets, free trade, and free commons.
- and finally, to strengthen a Liberal international order and an open global economy that safeguard human dignity and foster peaceful development.

I would like to speak to each of these goals this morning.

In South Asia, India's immediate neighborhood, U.S. and Indian interests could not be more congruent. India's former foreign secretary, Shyam Saran, put it well: "India would like the whole of South Asia to emerge as a community of flourishing democracies." That is the U.S. aim as well—not just because it is good in itself for the peoples of the region, but also because a democratic South Asia is the greatest guarantor of regional peace and prosperity. This, in turn, can provide India with the stable periphery it needs to continue its remarkable rise to power.

The main challenge to this common vision, as well as a central threat to U.S. and Indian security, is the violent Islamist extremism emanating from Afghanistan and Pakistan. My last visit to India was, by chance, just days after the tragic date that Indians mark as 26/11—the terror attacks in Mumbai. Being in India then was like experiencing September 11th all over again, and the restraint shown by Prime

Minister Singh was an amazing act of statesmanship. This only reaffirmed my deep-seated belief that India has every sovereign right to defend itself, its people, and its democratic way of life. And the United States should continue to support this goal through enhanced intelligence sharing and counterterrorism cooperation.

Our common security and values also converge in Afghanistan, and it must be stressed what a huge bearing the outcome of this conflict will have on U.S.-India relations. Of course, U.S. decisions in Afghanistan are driven by our own interests, but we must not forget that India wants the same things we do: a strong, independent Afghanistan that never again serves as a base for terrorism, that can govern and defend itself, and that emerges as a driver of regional cooperation and economic integration. And yet, Afghanistan has become a major source of tension between the United States and India, for the primary reason that India does not believe we will stay until the job is done. We need to address this issue head on—in part by working far more closely with India and Afghanistan together to advance the many objectives we all share, regardless of the regional sensitivities.

Furthermore, if we quit Afghanistan before positive conditions can be shaped and sustained on the ground, the consequences will certainly be terrible for us, but they will even be worse for India, which will have a terrorist safe haven on its periphery. The task of managing that threat would only deepen India's reliance on Russia and Iran, which would further strain U.S.-India relations. In short, I can think of few more immediate ways to damage the U.S.-India relationship—and to convince India that the United States is both a declining power and an unreliable partner—than for us to pull out of Afghanistan before achieving our goals.

Similarly, we must remember that U.S. policy toward Pakistan has enormous implications for our relations with India. We must cooperate with Pakistan's military for vital reasons of U.S. national security, but we must not forget that our broader strategic interests are not entirely aligned. Nothing the United States has done since September 11, 2001 has changed the basic strategic calculus of the Pakistani army: When compelled, it is willing to fight terrorist groups that threaten Pakistan, but not related groups that threaten Afghanistan, India, and increasingly America as well. What's worse, some in Pakistan's army and intelligence service continue to support these terrorist groups as tools of regional influence. Here, too, a belief that America will withdraw prematurely from Afghanistan has only reinforced the Pakistani military's inclination to hedge its bets. That this behavior has not proved catastrophic for Pakistan has been entirely too dependent on good luck and extraordinary restraint, especially on India's part. But if, God forbid, our luck runs out, I don't know if restraint will be an option, either for India or for us.

At the same time, just as we do not want to go back to viewing India solely through the lens of Pakistan, we hope India will not view its relationship with us mainly through that same lens now. The fact is, this is a difficult situation with no easy solutions. We cut off assistance and walked away from Pakistan once, and the problem got worse not better. Though our common interests with Pakistan's army are limited, the U.S. and India have a natural partner in the overwhelming majority of Pakistani society. We all desire a civilian-led, democratic Pakistan that lives in peace with India and fights all of the terrorist groups operating in Pakistan. India is demonstrating that it recognizes this point through its generous recent assistance to Pakistani flood victims. Such magnanimity is befitting a democratic great power, and it is my hope that India and the United States can do more together to define a common agenda with Pakistan's fragile democracy that benefits all of our peoples.

It is also my hope that India and the U.S. can do more together to support the peaceful democratic evolution of two other countries on India's periphery: Iran and Burma. Now, I know that many in India view these governments as flawed but necessary partners, believing that India cannot cede its influence to less scrupulous actors, which care little for the democratic aspirations of these oppressed peoples. I recognize this dilemma. After all, the United States faces much the same challenge in dealing with undemocratic partners of our own. Still, free nations like ours will never beat a government like China at its own game. Instead, we should recognize that democracy in Burma and Iran would be one of the greatest guarantors of U.S. and Indian security—and that our democratic values are actually a strategic asset, because they align us with the vast majority of people in Burma and Iran who long to be free. Ultimately, Iranians and Burmese will reclaim their countries, and when they do, they will remember who was on the right side of their history.

Strengthening democracy and security along India's periphery will propel India's rise beyond its region, which leads to the second goal I would propose for U.S.-India relations: shaping a preponderance of power that protects and promotes freedom in the Asia-Pacific region. One of the most positive but least noted features of Asia today is that the vast majority of its nearly three billion people live under governments of their own choosing. India is the greatest single example of this development, but there are many others. And this leads to a key strategic insight—that no matter how much any one rising power will shape the future of Asia, the prospect of growing cooperation among democracies in this region will do just as much, if not more, to ensure security and the success of freedom in Asia.

The most important implication of this insight is in the realm of security, and I would note with much satisfaction the growing defense cooperation among India and other trans-Pacific democracies, including the United States. Indeed, India conducts more military exercises with us than with any other country. In addition, India is deepening defense ties with other free nations in Asia like Australia, South Korea, Singapore, Indonesia, and especially Japan. The United States is doing the same, while also working together with India and other Asian democracies to defend vital regional waterways and global commons. Cooperation like this is good in itself, and the U.S. and India should encourage it for its own sake.

For much the same reason, we view the enhancement of India's defense capabilities and its increasing interoperability with U.S. forces as similarly positive. Now, I realize that many in India are skeptical of such a proposal, viewing it as limiting India's autonomy and eroding its sovereignty. In fact, the opposite is true. The decision about whether to cooperate with the United States will always rest with India's democratic leaders; greater interoperability simply creates more options for how to cooperate if India chooses to do so.

With political will on both sides, there is no reason why we cannot develop a joint U.S.-Indian concept of operations for both the Indian and Pacific Oceans. There is no reason why we cannot construct a network of intelligence sharing that creates a common picture of our common strategic challenges—on land, at sea, in space, and in cyberspace. There is no reason why India cannot post more officers at higher levels within PACOM and CENTCOM, with corresponding increases in representation for U.S. officers at India's commands. And there is no reason why we cannot work to facilitate India's deployment of advanced defense capabilities, such as nuclear submarines, aircraft carriers, missile defense architecture, as well as India's inclusion in the development of the Joint Strike Fighter.

Of course, some may think this is all directed at the containment of China, but in fact, the United States and India seek positive relationships with China, and we each hope that China's rise to power is accompanied by Chinese decisions to wield that power responsibly. It is precisely for this reason, however, that some recent Chinese actions are so concerning. From undermining the multilateral effort to pressure North Korea and Iran to give up their illicit nuclear weapons programs, to resisting entreaties to revalue its currency, to provocatively contesting territorial disputes with several Asian nations, there appears to be, to quote Prime Minister Singh, a "new assertiveness" on the part of China, and that is very troubling.

Furthermore, it does not escape notice, both in New Delhi and Washington, that some of the largest recipients of Chinese arms are states bordering India... that China continues to build deepwater ports suitable for military purposes in multiple nations encircling India ... and that China has settled all of its land border disputes except those with India, where Chinese incursions continue into Indian territory. It is not difficult to understand why many Indian strategists and leaders, including Prime Minister Singh, see in these actions a Chinese effort to surround India and weigh down its rise to global power with persistent local problems. Therefore, while India and the United States each continue to encourage a peaceful rise for China, we must recognize that one of the greatest factors for shaping this outcome, and making it more likely, is a robust U.S.-India strategic partnership—as well as our ability to multiply our power together with like-minded states.

The final goal I would propose for U.S.-India relations is to shore up the Liberal international order that has expanded peace and prosperity over the past seven decades. At its heart are the values of the Enlightenment that both India and the United States cherish: the sovereign equality of states, the peaceful resolution of disputes, the productive expansion of trade, and the inalienable rights of all individuals. This international system was largely secured by democratic power in the 20th century, and the United States now views the rising power of democratic India as a natural force to sustain this international order for the 21st century.

To play this role, India must be represented in the foundational institutions of the global order. The United States should push for India's inclusion in the International Energy Agency, the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and those parts of the global non-proliferation regime from which India is still excluded. Most of all, the United States should support India's permanent membership on an expanded U.N. Security Council. If we want India to join us in sharing the responsibilities for international peace and security, then the world's largest democracy needs to have a seat at the high table of international politics.

India is also naturally poised to lead in the global promotion of democratic governance, which is increasingly a norm of the international order that our nations should foster. I have served for many years as the Chairman of the International Republican Institute, and its mission is extremely close to my heart, as is that of its fellow organizations, the National Democratic Institute and National Endowment for Democracy. It is my hope that the United States can work together with India to develop its own national institutions for the promotion of democracy worldwide. In the final calculation, the most positive feature of U.S.-India relations is our

shared democratic values, and it is ultimately our success in advancing these values together that will provide the most enduring source of security for us both.

My friends: Our expectations for the U.S.-India partnership are extremely high, and we are right to set them as such. But our success is not a foregone conclusion, and I would like to close this morning on a cautionary note.

If India and the United States are to build a strategic partnership, we must each want it, and commit to it, and defend it in equal measure. And though our democratic values are our greatest source of strength, it is the domestic pressures of our democratic politics that pose perhaps the single greatest danger to our emerging partnership. We must each navigate these issues with care and forethought—for although India and the United States will each make our own decisions, those decisions will be significantly shaped by the actions of the other.

On the U.S. side, then, we cannot allow our anxieties about globalization to cause us to demonize India for crass political gain. Outsourcing is an inescapable feature of today's global economy, not an Indian plot to steal American jobs, and we should not condone any unfair punishments of Indian workers. On the Indian side, relations with the U.S. cannot remain a political club, which the party out of power uses to beat up the party in power for doing exactly what it would have done were it governing. More leaders on both sides need to speak up for this partnership, and fight harder for it, and build the public support needed to sustain our strategic priorities. If not, our relationship will fall far short of its potential, as it has before.

For most of the last century, the logic of a U.S.-India partnership was strong, but its achievement eluded us. If we are to steer a different course today, we must remain focused on the central animating purpose of our relationship—the idea that the oldest democracy and the largest democracy in the world can align our great power together to shape geopolitical conditions that ensure the success of freedom.

It is this simple, my friends: If the 21st century is defined more by peace than war, more by prosperity than misery, and more by freedom than tyranny, I believe future historians will look back and point to the fact that a strategic partnership was consummated between the world's two preeminent democratic powers, India and the United States. If we keep this vision of our relationship always uppermost in our minds, there is no dispute we cannot resolve, no investment in each other's success we cannot make, and nothing we cannot accomplish together.