



# **FORGING TRUST WITH INDIA**



# FORGING TRUST WITH INDIA

---

THE DRAMATIC STORY OF ACHIEVING THE  
US-INDIA CIVIL NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

David C. Mulford

HOOVER INSTITUTION PRESS  
*Stanford University | Stanford, California*



*With its eminent scholars and world-renowned library and archives, the Hoover Institution seeks to improve the human condition by advancing ideas that promote economic opportunity and prosperity while securing and safeguarding peace for America and all mankind. The views expressed in its publications are entirely those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the staff, officers, or Board of Overseers of the Hoover Institution.*

*hoover.org*

Hoover Institution at Leland Stanford Junior University,  
Stanford, California 94305-6003

Reproduced from *Packing for India: A Life of Action in Global Finance and Diplomacy* by David Mulford by permission of the University of Nebraska Press. Copyright © 2014 by David Mulford. Published by Potomac Books, Inc.

Preface copyright © 2024 by the Board of Trustees of the Leland Stanford Junior University.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without written permission of the publisher and copyright holders.

First printing 2024

30 29 28 27 26 25 24      7 6 5 4 3 2 1

# Contents

Preface	vii
1 Writing a New History with India	1
2 Going the Distance	59
About the Author	107



# Preface

The US-India civil nuclear initiative, launched in July 2005 during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit to Washington, marked a pivotal moment in diplomatic relations between the United States and India. The initiative was a complex and controversial undertaking, requiring years of focused effort, patience, and faith.

During the years it took to reach a deal between the United States and India, our countries forged a lasting bond and trust for a new era, and we learned how to approach and accomplish difficult and great things together on the world stage. Its accomplishment in 2008 was historic and stands as the cornerstone of modern US-India relations as we advance into the twenty-first century. The significance of this agreement in shaping the trajectory of US-India relations cannot be overstated.

The publication of the two chapters of my book *Packing for India: A Life of Action in Global Finance and Diplomacy* provides a definitive personal account of the negotiation of the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement over the period 2005–2008.<sup>1</sup> This account of negotiating a

---

1. David Mulford, *Packing for India: A Life of Action in Global Finance and Diplomacy* (Lincoln, NE: Potomac Books, 2014), <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/potomac-books/9781612347158/>



transformative US-India treaty that forms the foundation of relations between two great power democracies today is vital to understanding the future evolution of the twenty-first century.

In early 2005, the United States took the initiative by expressing its willingness to engage with India to establish India's access to the world of civil nuclear commerce and technology, from which India had been isolated since 1974 by its unwillingness to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1974 and the development of its own strategic nuclear weapon.

This signaled the beginning of the personal leadership of President George W. Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice. This was followed by support for India in the US Congress, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and major countries worldwide as a country that could be trusted to observe the rules of nuclear nonproliferation and possess access to the civil nuclear technology so vital to its future economic development.

This signal of trust in India and recognition of its global importance transformed the US-India relationship and set the stage for the challenges that lay ahead. Each phase of a negotiated change was accomplished step by step in the US Congress, including by the amendment of the US Atomic Energy Act of 1954, the endorsement of wide-ranging changes by the IAEA, and the acceptance of India's possession of civil nuclear technology by the unanimous consensus of the forty-five-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group.

India is rapidly emerging as a world power. Its population of 1.4 billion has passed that of China. The average age of India's population is ten years younger than China's. India, which continues to achieve above-average annual growth, now has a clear path to becoming the world's number three economy by 2030.

As a trusted partner and an internationally recognized responsible nuclear power, India secured access to advanced nuclear technologies, scientific expertise, and collaboration between scientists and researchers. While the initial focus was nuclear collaboration, it has resulted in greater access to technology and advanced equipment across a number

of sciences, technologies, and industries, including defense, space, and manufacturing.

India secured access to a future of energy security through nuclear power, which will be essential to its economic development while protecting the environment. Nuclear energy will take billions of dollars and decades to develop. However, the Indians are committed to the potential of having a diverse energy mix that includes renewables, fossil fuels, and nuclear energy.

The world's oldest democracy and its largest democracy are joined by wide-ranging social, cultural, and economic interests reaching back in time, and today share a key strategic, political, and economic partnership.

India has a rich and remarkable history. Its strategically important position in Central/Southeast Asia has always been a historic reality. India's independence in 1947 after more than three hundred years of colonial domination marked the beginning of its modern transformation.

India's opportunity to fulfill its global destiny and its stunning economic rise, partly because of its access to the world of nuclear technology, are helping India build a globally competitive economic foundation for its rise to world power and influence.

The growth and size of India's economy will require massive energy supplies. This was already known in 2005, when the civil nuclear deal was announced. One outcome of the deal was to give India the legal ability to draw on civil nuclear technology to answer the burgeoning demands to modernize and for its people to prosper.

While India and the United States have not realized their full potential in partnering on the commercialization of nuclear energy after fifteen years, they have become major trading partners across almost every sector, with the United States becoming India's largest trading partner, at nearly \$130 billion in 2023, growing from around \$25 billion in 2007. Defense trade alone rose from near zero when I arrived to be US ambassador to India in 2005 to over \$20 billion in 2020, highlighting the defense cooperation between the two countries. This

is just scratching the surface of the transformation in both the economic and political relationships resulting from the deal.

Finally, we should remember India's neighbor to the north, China. While the civil nuclear deal was indeed about partnering with India on their energy needs, strategically it set the two countries on a path toward strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific, across several industries—including defense—enabling our two countries to work together to offset rising Chinese power and maintain shared and balanced power in the region.

\* \* \*

I wish to express my appreciation to the Hoover Institution's Huntington Program on Strengthening US-India Relations and the Hoover Press for recognizing that these two chapters are the definitive account from an insider of what was required for the United States and India to achieve this landmark agreement. I also wish to express my appreciation to the University of Nebraska Press for allowing these two chapters to be republished by the Hoover Institution.

I have described my highly diverse life's work and experiences in my book *Packing for India*, and readers may be interested in learning more about my previous experiences. I was in Saudi Arabia during the 1970s and early '80s, investing early historic oil revenues. I spent nine years at the US Treasury in the 1980s and '90s as under secretary for international affairs and US G-7 deputy, dealing with international economic and monetary issues and crises such as restructuring Latin American debt and maintaining financial stability during the dissolution of the Soviet Union. And in the 1960s, I documented the rise of democracy and independence in Zambia while completing my doctor of philosophy degree at Oxford University.

My book also includes my global experiences with my wife, Jeannie, and her leadership in advocating for cancer awareness in India.

# 1

## Writing a New History with India

There are times when one has to be completely honest with oneself. How often have we heard some public figure overdramatize a new appointment or opportunity with the words, “Everything I have done and experienced in my life up to now has prepared me for this moment.” Outbursts like this have always struck me as excessive and probably inaccurate. The truth, however, is that when I became US ambassador to India in January 2004, that very thought took shape in my own consciousness. Fortunately, I made no statement except to my wife, Jeannie, who had herself come to the same conclusion. In fact, she went further, saying “You must write a book about your unique life, and I already have the title: ‘Packing for India.’”

No doubt India was poised to emerge as a great nation. When I was approached in the summer of 2003 about serving as US ambassador to India, I was sure of India’s rise. The surprise turned out to be that it happened so quickly and dramatically in the succeeding years. President George W. Bush’s appraisal was right on the mark: one-sixth of humanity, over one billion people, living peacefully in a successful democracy. This has to be important for the United States.

Secretary Colin Powell called on a Saturday afternoon in June 2003 to ask on behalf of President Bush if I would be willing to serve

as US ambassador to India. I had been outside vacuuming the car when Jeannie rushed out, shouting, “Turn off the vacuum, the secretary of state is calling!” Jeannie listened with alarm to my side of the conversation:

“I have never thought of being an ambassador before, in fact I’ve never wanted to be an ambassador.”

“You know, Colin, that I do not have an ambassadorial personality. I am the less-flexible Treasury type of person, as you know from our past dealings.”

“If I were to be an ambassador the only countries that I would be interested in are India and China.”

Luckily for me, as Colin put it, it was India the president had in mind, and he wanted an answer by the following Tuesday morning. Apparently, the president wanted someone with extensive government and business experience, because he believed this was what was needed now in India.

Following the call, Jeannie and I sat at the kitchen table and within the hour had made the easiest big decision in our twenty-five years together. We had both visited India in the 1990s on business and as tourists. We called it the country of kaleidoscopic diversity—color, action, confusion, pathos, politeness, convictions, and huge aspirations. India was so much more than a large, exotic land. Indian culture had occupied the same space of the subcontinent for five thousand years. It had been conquered and ruled by many different rulers, but it had captured its rulers and co-opted them into its own ethos, remaining today a country uniquely representative of its cultural and religious roots.

To me, the modern miracle of India was that in its first fifty years as an independent nation it had overcome the tragedies of partition and massively destructive communal violence after independence to become a lively, secular, multicultural, multireligious, multiracial, multiethnic, multicaste, multilingual, multiregional democracy. India was diversity personified, but its governance was a settled matter under a comprehensive, much-amended constitution. In a world in which the

United States professed to teach democracy to many nations with only minimal success, in just sixty years India established itself as a great functioning democracy. In fact, democracy for India was the means by which it had created itself, governed itself, and become a great nation.

Relations between the United States and India in those first fifty years were a very up and down affair. There was affection and admiration between the two democracies but little in the way of sustained common interests. India ran a planned economy modeled on the Soviet Union, which was also India's chief supplier of weapons. India's economy was characterized by extensive government intervention, high protective tariffs, prohibitions against foreign direct investment, and a smothering bureaucracy inherited along with the English language from British colonial government. This model, essentially an import substitution economy with heavy government intervention, constrained India's growth during its first forty years of independent nationhood. India's growth remained mainly 2–4 percent, never exceeding 5 percent for any sustained period, while the population exploded from about three hundred million at the time of independence to over one billion after the turn of the century. India's agricultural sector, which occupies the great majority of India's population, seldom grew beyond 2.5 percent per year. Burdened with a rising population and low growth, India generated massive poverty and most of the ills that go with it.

Among the poorest developing nations, India nominated itself as the leader of the developing world, head of the movement of ostensibly nonaligned states. No wonder that in the 1980s at Treasury I found that India took a contrary position to virtually all international economic and financial policies of the United States, particularly including in the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which remained through the period one of India's only large sources of external capital. The same pattern of opposition to the United States characterized India's positions in the United Nations.

Two major developments in the early 1990s brought fundamental change to India and began a process that started moving India's interests closer to those of the United States. One was the tearing down

of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet empire. The second was the near-bankruptcy of India in 1991 that marked the beginning of India's reform process and gradual opening to the global economy. Suddenly, the Soviet economic model had collapsed, not only in the Soviet Union but across the whole of Eastern Europe. Just as abruptly, India virtually ran out of foreign exchange and was on the brink of economic disaster. This was when Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, then acting as India's finance minister, instituted India's emerging economic reform program, which gradually pulled India back from the brink. The implications of the Soviet collapse took more time to filter through India's intelligentsia, but within two to three years India realized that it was in its interests to seek stronger relations with the world's now-sole superpower.

It is important to understand the unique nature of the economic reform process in India. Throughout the 1990s India was governed by a series of multiparty coalition governments. Therefore, it is fair to say that since 1991 the vast majority of Indian political parties have been part of a government coalition that at one time or another engaged in advancing the process of economic reform. Indian politics can be colorful and divisive, but achieving broad consensus on economic transformation has been a priority in the political process. Thus, while reform in India and its movement toward opening to the global economy has been frustratingly slow (compared, say, with China), reforms once established have stayed in place. Despite changing governments there has not been backward movement or major reversals of reforms already put in place. This, it seems, is a tribute to India's consensual approach to change as it put in place during the 1990s the foundations that later would promote stronger growth. Of course, the outside world sees India as slow and disorganized, both accurate assessments to some extent, but what is not so visible is the steady movement forward without major political blowups. India conducts reforms gradually, under the political radar. Rarely are matters brought to a truly divisive confrontation that results in retaliatory backward movement or a collapse of the coalition government.

As the decade of the 1990s advanced, US-India relations improved and attention was given to modestly reducing the role of government in India's economy. India's version of privatization, known in India rather strictly as "disinvestment," visualized the sell down of government positions in state-owned enterprises but nowhere near levels that might threaten government control. At one point in the mid-1990s, for example, Credit Suisse First Boston, my investment banking firm, and Goldman Sachs won the mandate to lead-manage a share offering (disinvestment) to the public of 10–15 percent of the Indian Oil Corporation. Under subsequent coalition governments, the stock offering never went forward.

Two exceptions to state control emerged in the 1990s, however, that over time would have a profound effect on India's transformation. One was liberalization in the telecommunications sector, including new startup opportunities and privatization of government entities. The second was the unimpeded rise of India's information technology sector, which was to show the way forward for an industry outside the grip of government ownership or the excessive reach of government bureaucracy.

There was also growing evidence of progress, both on the political and economic fronts, in relations with the United States. My assessment of the reform process in India at that time was that despite its slow and uneven progress, the reform impulse was genuine and enjoyed significant political support. India had accepted that it could no longer afford its respectable socialist, slow-growing, import-substitution economic model.

Once again, two major events intervened near the end of the nineties to set back India's progress and its improving relations with the United States. The first was the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the second was India's decision in 1998 to test a nuclear weapon in direct contravention of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty of 1974, which India had never signed. The currency crisis that washed across Asia in 1997 was a short and destructive wakeup call to the global financial community, but India, thanks to its tightly regulated financial markets



and its capital and exchange controls, was for the most part protected from the turbulence of international markets. Liberalization of India's financial markets as a part of its further opening to the global economy was now on the back burner and would remain so for years to come.

The nuclear test of 1998 was also a costly setback to India's global opening aspirations. India developed its modest nuclear capacity for energy and nuclear weapons to defend against its two nuclear-armed neighbors, Pakistan and China, but for this India was ostracized worldwide and punished for its strategic nuclear program. The United States and most other members of the nuclear suppliers' group of nations, signatories to the 1974 treaty, imposed sanctions on India that disrupted India's economy. The Clinton administration, which had seemed friendly to India's overtures for closer relations, suddenly became the key disruptive influence to India's economy and its sense of military security. The fact that India was not a signatory of the 1974 treaty and had developed its nuclear capacity without inward or outward proliferation counted for nothing. India's isolation from nuclear commerce was deepened and fortified, while modest military equipment purchases were disrupted with painful and deeply resented implications for India's perceived military security.

US sanctions lasted fewer than four years before they were lifted by President Bush after the 9/11 attacks. Still, the negative fallout from sanctions on US-India relations has been long lasting and even today is still only gradually being overcome by US defense suppliers.

Shortly after the lifting of US sanctions Pakistani terrorists attacked India's parliament in a blatant and destructive effort to undermine Indian democracy and political stability. Suddenly the world at large was focused on the terrifying reality of two mortal enemies, sharing a border, armed with nuclear weapons, and inexperienced in nuclear diplomacy, locked in a high-stakes confrontation. The politicians and global investors who might have seen India as a nation with prospects were severely rattled, even after the zenith of potential nuclear confrontation had passed. The subcontinent was now seen as a more dangerous place; at the same time, the near-miss nuclear

experience seemed to have had a sobering effect on the rhetoric of both nations. By 2003, economic growth had picked up in both countries. This is how things stood at the opening of 2003, the year I use to date the emergence of India's modern high-growth economy. In December 2003 the Senate confirmed my appointment as ambassador, and I was in New Delhi in early 2004.

\* \* \*

Jeannie and I arrived from London in the middle of the night and were taken directly to Roosevelt House, the official residence and our new home in India for the next five years. The full staff of eleven and the residence manager greeted us with a brief candlelit Hindu ritual of welcome. Delicious Roosevelt House soup was served, and as we waited for our bags to arrive from the airport, we could see out into the deep, softly lit garden and pool area. The night was deliciously cool with a pungent haze of fog from the settling coolness and the smoke of fires in the sleeping dwellings and encampments of road workers and police strung along the roads of Delhi.

It was Sunday, so we had a day to rest and prepare for the first business day at the embassy. Winter mornings in Delhi are invariably hazy or even shrouded in heavy fog. When we arose, soft, filtered sunlight filled the garden of large, exotic trees, some covered in bright orange blooms, and a wide variety of brightly colored flowers. But what struck us first that day in the garden, and every day for the next five years, were the brilliant green parakeets and other birds that formed what we came to call the "magic kingdom."

Stepping directly into a major diplomatic post is not easy, especially for a political appointee who had never before been in an embassy, except as a visitor. My arrival had been anticipated for months, in both the country and the embassy community. When we arrived, the US mission in India numbered more than two thousand employees, of which approximately six hundred were American citizens, with the balance being Indian nationals, many of whom were loyal and long-standing

employees. In our years in India, the mission became the largest civilian mission in the American system and also the most diverse in its representation of US government departments and agencies. A number of US embassies have large groups attached to them, such as the US Agency for International Development (AID) contingent in Cairo, but in India the diversity of representation reflected the broad interface between India and the United States, which touched virtually every field of human activity one could imagine.

Roosevelt House stood in its own garden next to the main chancery, both buildings designed by the American architect Edward Durrell Stone in the early 1950s and now categorized as preserved buildings by the United States. The full compound covered forty acres, three city blocks, and included a chancery annex where the large visa operation was housed, garden-type housing units, a recreation center, medical clinic, the marine barracks, a baseball field complete with lights, support buildings, and the American School of some fifteen hundred students and teachers. Delhi city streets surrounded the compound and cut through in two different places, one separating the school and causing a significant security challenge, and the other separating the marine barracks from the chancery and exposing the annex, where visa applicants waited in long lines.

In the State Department training for new ambassadors and their spouses, which takes place in Washington for two weeks, one is constantly reminded that your first duty as ambassador is the security of the embassy and all its staff at all times and under all circumstances. This is no empty challenge. The marine detachment (ours was eleven at full complement) is there to protect the embassy from intrusion and to secure the communications facilities and interior of the embassy from attack. The setback of buildings from the surrounding streets, as well as the walls and gates giving access to the embassy, have to be protected and kept under constant surveillance for signs of possible attack. One needs only to read the daily intelligence traffic to know that it is not an empty threat that America faces around the world.

The inspector general of the State Department had informed me before leaving Washington of the serious morale problem that existed in the US mission in India. This had apparently arisen from a combination of factors stretching back over the years of disrupted relations as well as from the management approach of my predecessor. Deputy Chief of Mission Robert Blake had been sent to Delhi pending my arrival to begin to address the local situation. Bob was a competent and respected Foreign Service officer who by the end of 2003 had improved the situation, but with no sitting ambassador present morale remained a significant problem when we arrived.

The job challenge for an ambassador in the American system is very much a team challenge for the ambassador and his or her spouse. An American mission is a family community that responds to a leadership approach that is based on the recognition and practice of family values. The sense of family, though different from one family to the next, is an important binding force for workers and dependents working for the United States in distant places, often under difficult circumstances.

Therefore, Jeannie and I began day one at the embassy meeting people, one by one, in their place of work. We did not hold a large town-hall meeting but instead greeted and shook hands with virtually every employee in the embassy, first in Delhi, then in Mumbai, Chennai, and Kolkata. We made this our priority of the first two weeks, and it worked well with both American and Indian employees.

One of the chief benefits from this process was that it gave me the opportunity to meet a large group of friendly, able, interesting people and to gain an early understanding of how diverse and far reaching our contacts and working relations were with the Indian community.

To understand the magnitude of the transformation in US-India relations that followed over the next five years, it is essential to recapture the cross-currents and sensitivities in play between the two countries at the beginning of 2004. The 9/11 attack in New York had deeply shocked India, and many Indians and Indian Americans had been killed. There had been an immediate outpouring of sympathy for the

United States, but more than two years later, there was a mixture of alarm and opposition to the US response in Iraq. India, after all, had a Muslim population of nearly 150 million, some two-thirds of whom were Sunni Muslims. Four months after 9/11 India suffered a bloody attack on its parliament building in New Delhi, the symbolic and operational heart of Indian democracy. The United States had, of course, declared itself outraged by the attack and expressed its deepest sympathies with the people of India. From India's point of view however, the attack, carried out by Pakistani terrorists against India's parliament, went unpunished by the United States in its relations with Pakistan. When the State Department issued booming statements that all terrorism anywhere in the world was equally unacceptable, where was the evidence of that conviction in America's continuing close relations with the perpetrators of India's own 9/11? No wonder that even at senior levels of society, Indians believed that America, despite its strong words, had a double standard when it came to terrorism in India, especially terrorism spawned from America's friend and ally to the northwest.

Meanwhile, the lingering resentments from the 1998–2001 sanctions, the sense of injustice caused by thirty years' isolation from the world of civil nuclear commerce, the denial of full access to sophisticated space and defense technologies, and India's rising concerns about America's entry into Iraq and its presence in Afghanistan complicated relations. Finally, among India's intelligentsia, media leaders, academics, think tank communities, foreign service personnel, and many retired bureaucrats, there remained a legacy of mistrust and suspicion of the United States reaching back to the US support of Pakistan in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.

India, I discovered, was not alone in having such lingering suspicions and resentments. They were also present in the US State Department and Foreign Service as well as in the US defense establishment and the CIA. In fact, while going through my brief period of orientation at the State Department in Washington, I was told I faced a very tough job in India and that I would no doubt have trouble recruiting Foreign Service officers to serve there. Two years later I had fifteen to twenty

keen applicants for any senior embassy or consulate position opening in India. So much for lingering suspicions and resentments!

My first three to four months in India made a deep and lasting impression on me and set the basis for my approach to India over the next five years. Our widespread visits throughout the US mission also gave us the opportunity of meeting Indians around the country. This permitted us to begin gathering a wider sense of Indians' attitudes away from embedded views of the political community in New Delhi. As midwestern Americans who understood the limits to how Washington represents the people spread across America, we assumed, correctly as it turned out, that the same was to some extent true in India.

Many of the people we met had children or relatives in America or had visited America themselves. We found that the United States was popular, admired, and respected. This did not mean that everyone agreed with our policies or supported what we were doing in the world. It did mean, however, that they admired what I called the ethos of America, our basic values, the clear sense that America was a land of opportunity, where a person's prospects were not constrained by the multitude of limitations and complexities of Indian society. Many of the people we met had relatives, offspring, or acquaintances who had made these opportunities a reality. We were also seen as a generous nation and high expectations were held for our willingness and capacity to stand up for the right things in the world. Most saw America's involvement in Iraq as a mistake. The removal of Saddam Hussein was considered a positive result, but perhaps at too high a cost. Many thought our support for Pakistan was unconditional and therefore viewed as a sign of America's traditional naiveté and a barrier to the establishment of a relationship of full trust between our governments. Yet despite the traumatic events since 9/11 in the United States, it was clear that India's large Muslim population was not radicalized. Islamic opposition to the United States had simply not taken root in India. India's Muslims, it seemed, were Indians first and Muslims second.

The three key conclusions I drew from these early experiences in India were, first, that an enormous reservoir of goodwill existed toward the

United States among the great majority of citizens of India. Americans enjoyed dynamic and friendly relationships with Indians that were separate from and in my opinion more important at that moment than our official bilateral relationship.

The second conclusion was that Indians' attitudes toward Pakistan were not at all uniform. Whereas the common view of the State Department in Washington was that Indo-Pak issues dominated all aspects of our relationship, this was not the case on the ground in India, even in Delhi. To be more precise, I found as I moved around India and became acquainted with younger people in Delhi considerable variation in the strength of views about Pakistan. In the south of India I did not feel Pakistan mattered very much to people. The young were not particularly interested in Pakistan; they were much more engaged with issues to do with education and opportunities to get ahead. India's young parliamentarians were also much less engaged on Pakistan issues than were their elders. Their focus was on India's future, its rise in the world, and the opportunities for modernizing India's position in the global economy. The high-tech and business communities likewise had other priorities. In the final analysis, it was the "mandarin" community in Delhi that felt the strongest and seemed to obsess the most about Pakistan. This included India's think-tank community and many of its academic leaders and media people. Pakistan was also a dominant issue among the Muslim communities of the north (an important voting bloc in state elections) and also especially among India's older generation and their descendants who had suffered through partition and its aftermath.

The third conclusion was perhaps the most important. The wide range of subject matter and issues that came forward to me, together with the variety of people and programs in the embassy, impressed upon me the far-reaching diversity of America's growing interface with India. The US mission in India was on its way to becoming the largest civil mission in the system, but also the most diverse in terms of departmental and agency representation on the ground in New Delhi. In addition, India was now second only to Mexico in the issue of visas to the United States,

and it was far and away number one in the world in the issue of H-1B foreign worker visas.

For me, all of this underlined that the future of US-India relations would be driven more by our civil societies, private sectors, and person-to-person relations than by the official bilateral core of the relationship. The range of engagement was truly comprehensive, touching virtually every area of human endeavor. In addition to the highest-priority areas of political and economic relations, the United States was engaged in science; health care and disease control (through the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta); agriculture; space; education; transportation; civil aviation; US AID; all branches of the military; defense sales; human trafficking; religious freedom; public diplomacy; FBI and legal affairs; intelligence; counterterrorism; and commercial services, for which there were seven branch offices.

These many areas of engagement promised to generate a steady flow of government, NGO, and private-sector visits. As ambassador, and given the kind of broad-based relationship I could see developing between the United States and India, I decided to give attention to every type of program interface with India that was present in the mission community. This would not only build morale in the mission, it would also recognize the particular areas that I saw building in our relations. In short, I decided that I needed to approach the ambassador's job as a chief executive officer managing about twenty divisions instead of simply a traditional ambassador focusing on the high-level aspects of bilateral diplomatic relations. In the end I was able to do both. In fact, the ambassador role and the hands-on CEO approach were mutually reinforcing throughout my five years in India and account for the success I feel I achieved there.

\* \* \*

In early 2004 the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government was nearing the end of its five-year term. Elections had to be held by May, and the BJP believed itself well placed to win the general election comfortably.



The Indian economy had reached growth levels of approximately 8 percent in recent quarterly reports, and the BJP adopted the campaign slogan for the election of “India shining.”

An Indian general election is a major democratic event by any standard. India’s approximately 650 million registered voters turn out in force on specified dates during a roughly five-week period of voting in sequentially designated areas of the country. All voting in India is electronic. The results are stored until the designated day for the announcement of results—in this case May 15, 2004. Exit polling is not permitted by India’s formidable election commission.

In the lead-up to the election the pundits, media, and the mandarin community in Delhi were strongly of the opinion that the BJP would win the election without difficulty. In fact, the retiring BJP government had pledged that it would lift the foreign equity ownership cap in the insurance industry from 26 percent to 49 percent in the first twenty-one days of its new government. But it was not to be. The BJP was defeated despite India’s stunning growth record, and the Congress Party, long out of government, was given the opportunity of forming a new coalition government.

It was hard to say who was more surprised. The BJP had not expected to lose, and the Congress had not expected to win. The next few weeks produced high drama. Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the leader of the Congress Party and the natural choice in India’s parliamentary system to become prime minister and form a new coalition government, withdrew from the invitation issued by the president of India. There was strong opposition to her becoming prime minister, because she was foreign born and had entered elective politics only as the widow of Rajiv Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1991. Nevertheless, Mrs. Gandhi was and remains the leader of the Congress Party. Her withdrawal was seen as a great act of selflessness, which in Indian politics virtually sanctified Mrs. Gandhi. She proposed Manmohan Singh as prime minister, and the Congress set about the complex task of forming a coalition government. This required the support of India’s leftist parties, the Communists of West Bengal and the state of Kerala. In the

end, the Communists supported the formation of the government but declined to take responsible cabinet positions in the new government, thus preserving their freedom to oppose specific policy initiatives and to withdraw their support from the government at any time.

In the next weeks the consecration of the new United Progressive Alliance coalition required the negotiation of a common minimum policy agreement binding the coalition partners together and setting the broad policies for the new government. The diversity of the parties made this a difficult and time-consuming task. The leftist parties that were essential to the formation of a government but which had elected not to serve as responsible ministers in that government were particularly difficult negotiating partners. Certainly, they would not sanction a provision in the common minimum policy agreement asserting the importance of a “strategic partnership” with the United States. We could therefore only wait through the weeks of negotiation, and then, when the common minimum policy document was finalized, we waited through the many days required to hand out ministerial posts among the coalition partners. For many weeks there was no clear signal as to whether the new Congress-led government would move forward with the US strategic relationship or return to the policies of Congress’s past.

Prime Minister Singh was not one of the large beasts of Indian politics. He was considered a technocrat but also as an honest politician who led India’s opening reform efforts in 1991, a challenge of extreme difficulty he had met with intelligence and authority. It was said that he did not have his own political constituency but enjoyed the full personal trust of Mrs. Gandhi. It was perhaps this last consideration that set Manmohan Singh apart. He brought a gracious and sturdy patience to the sensitive complexities of establishing a new government in India. Beyond the formation of the coalition and the assignment of ministerial portfolios, Prime Minister Singh was burdened with the outspoken criticisms of the opposition, waiting in the wings for the coalition process to collapse, that he was not prime ministerial material, that he was a mere functionary of Sonia Gandhi, and that inevitably

he would be neither capable nor empowered to run the whole government of India.

Prime Minister Singh survived these attacks and many more like them over the next five years. As time passed, these challenges were shown to be well wide of the mark. Prime Minister Singh consistently demonstrated patience and respect in dealing with colleagues, caution regarding inflammatory political issues, and capability—all integral in dealing with this unique format for parliamentary government—all while being a prime minister separate from the leader of the governing party, who held no official position in government. These became the distinguishing features of leadership by Prime Minister Singh.

There was, therefore, no grand announcement that India would continue its strategic partnership efforts with the United States. Instead, there was an informal message, quietly given and without detailed definition. By September it was clear that the relationship with the United States was on track, tentatively perhaps, and without the benefit of formal public confirmation. With plenty of other issues to occupy the new coalition government and the Indian media, formal recognition of renewed US-India relations could only be counterproductive.

Prior to the general election the effort to build a closer strategic relationship between the United States and India was already under way. Relations with India's BJP government in early 2004 were good. An initiative that had been given the awkward name of Next Steps Strategic Partnership (NSSP) was launched at the beginning of 2004. Its purpose was to bring together elements of the two bureaucracies to identify and if possible to eliminate regulatory and administrative barriers that prevented India and America from working more closely together. The target of this collaboration was the debris left over from sanctions that discouraged or prevented the expansion of trade relations in sensitive fields such as high-tech exports, defense or space-related products, and missile defense technologies. We expected that significant progress could be achieved in these and other areas without having to make changes in US legislation. The initiative was aimed

at deepening political relations with India and improving prospects for India's recently launched peace initiatives with Pakistan. Prime Minister Vajpayee was seen by the United States in a very favorable light, and his national security advisor, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, was seen as the chief visionary both for the peace initiative and the effort to strengthen US relations.

NSSP, despite its cumbersome name, marked an important step in the new beginning. Although it operated chiefly at the technical level and in the end bridged two different governments in India over the space of little more than a year, its progress was both immediate and measurable. Approximately 26 percent of high-tech US exports in 2003 required burdensome export licensing procedures left over in many cases from the 1998 sanctions. A year later exports requiring licensing of this type were reduced to only 1 percent of the total. Raytheon, a major American defense contractor, concluded a small but important radar contract with the Indian Ministry of Defense, and confidential briefings were started between our two governments on missile defense technology. Efforts were also made to improve our interface with India in the defense sales field generally.

On the other hand, NSSP revealed the magnitude of the challenge we faced in overcoming the past. Before leaving Washington I had been alerted to the extreme sensitivity of Indo-Pak issues, as they were termed in the State Department. Once in India I began to make my own appraisal of Indo-Pak relations. I had learned long ago that standardized, prepackaged philosophies seldom hold up on the ground.

It was not a question of Pakistan being unimportant to the United States. Obviously, it was very important, and there were clearly matters of great sensitivity in Indo-Pak relations. Nevertheless, it was clear to me Pakistan was not the dominant issue: India did not need to see every issue through the prism of its relationship with Pakistan. I believed that we should work to dehyphenate Indo-Pak and make clear to the Indian government and to the Indian public that the United States perceived its relationship with India as a freestanding

bilateral relationship and was supportive of India's vision of becoming a world power. Our relationship with Pakistan was also a freestanding relationship with an important ally, but the vision was regional, not global in scope.

Initially, this evolving approach had limited traction. Rumors that Congress would consider selling new or upgraded F-16s to Pakistan were front-page headline news in India. The terrorism double standard and the United States' apparent unwillingness to exercise credible conditions on its aid to Pakistan in order to force a reduction in its hostility to India continued to be major complaints in Delhi.

There was a particularly graphic example of these sensitivities in March 2004 when Secretary of State Colin Powell visited New Delhi. India had announced its general election to be concluded in May of that year. The secretary's visit was warmly welcomed, and Secretary Powell did an outstanding job of conveying the warmth and support of the United States for India. He was due to visit Pakistan following India and was pointedly asked by the Indians not to say or do anything in Pakistan that would upset the ongoing election process in India. The next day in Pakistan, the secretary announced that the United States would give major non-NATO ally status to Pakistan, giving Pakistan easier access to certain types of military equipment.

A firestorm of rage swept through Delhi in the next few days. The concession granted to Pakistan was not particularly significant, and we at the embassy, with Secretary Powell's approval, immediately acknowledged that the secretary's announcement had been an inadvertent error and would not in practice pose any significant disadvantage to India. But the damage had been done, and the outrage was something to behold.

Yet within the first few months of India's new government becoming operational, an overture was made to me that provided an important opening for future relations. One evening in November a senior official asked to see me informally at the residence. Over a cup of tea on the veranda, he explained that India wished to expand its business relations with the United States, but that within the Indian government

it was felt that important US companies did not show the top-level interest or commitment that India expected. He cited as an example the Boeing Company's approach to Air India's current interest in the tender for sixty-eight wide-body airliners as a part of India's plan to transform its airline industry. India and the United States, after years of fruitless dialogue, had agreed after brief negotiations in 2003 to establish the world's most liberal bilateral open skies agreement. In late 2003 India had agreed to buy forty-three single-aisle Airbus aircraft after a contentious tender competition between Airbus and Boeing, in which Boeing believed it had not been treated fairly. Boeing raised its case with the secretary of state in late 2003 and asked the US government to intercede on its behalf with the government of India. Secretary Powell had declined to make an approach to the Indians, and I likewise had advised Boeing's representatives in India against taking steps in court to try to force Indian Airlines, India's domestic carrier, to rebid the contract. Boeing's representatives claimed that the company could have improved its price by approximately 20 percent but were not given the opportunity to do so. My advice, based on extensive experience with similar situations, was to refrain from starting a fight they were unlikely to win. The best strategy would have been to present their most competitive price the first time around and be prepared to improve marginally if that were required to win the business.

In any case, the Air India purchase would be for large, long-distance aircraft that could perform nonstop service between India and the United States. India perceived that it was losing its most important market, the United States, to other airlines flying routes through Singapore, Dubai, and Frankfurt, and to recover that market under the new US-India open skies agreement it would need a fleet of the most competitive long-distance aircraft. The value of such a transaction would be approximately \$9 billion.

Hence, when my visitor mentioned Boeing as an example of the kind of US company India would like to develop a relationship with, it is not hard to imagine how alert I became. Essentially, the point the Indian official made was that Boeing did not project a broad vision for

India from the top leadership of the company. Its representatives were lower-level local sales representatives whose sole preoccupation was to market airplanes to Air India, neglecting the fact that Boeing was a major American corporation manufacturing a wide range of products applicable to India's future for air travel and defense. As a businessman, the official felt certain I would understand the point he was trying to make, and indeed his message was clearly understood.

A few days later I telephoned Harry Stonecipher, CEO of Boeing, in Chicago. The tender deadline for the sixty-eight aircraft was set for December 24, and it was now late November. When Mr. Stonecipher took the call, I explained the approach I had received and suggested that he should make a visit to India in the next two weeks to meet with India's top political leadership. His agenda should be to project Boeing's vision for India above and beyond the forthcoming tender. He should be as broad as possible in product terms and emphasize what Boeing could bring to India as a business committed to India's own development. I explained that I had on my desk a letter from the secretary of state to the prime minister advocating on behalf of Boeing, which I would feel much more comfortable sending forward if I knew Mr. Stonecipher would visit India's top leaders in the next two weeks. Mr. Stonecipher came to India, paid visits to its leading ministers, including the prime minister (all meetings I attended), and successfully projected Boeing's broad vision for India. The following year Boeing won the order for sixty-eight new airplanes and went on over the next three years to sell some \$25 billion of aircraft to India. Later still, its defense business made important breakthroughs as the entire scale of its commitment to India changed.

\* \* \*

The year 2005 marked the beginning of our great breakthrough with India. President Bush had won his second term. Condoleezza Rice was our new secretary of state, and she was succeeded in the White House as national security advisor by her number two, Stephen Hadley. As far

as I was concerned, this was in every way a winning team. In the president's first term, his national security assessment had singled out India as a top foreign policy priority for the United States. The NSSP negotiation, which marked the first step toward a new strategic partnership, had made good progress.

Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld stopped in New Delhi in early December 2004 on a tour through the area that also included Pakistan. This was an important visit, because it provided the secretary his first opportunity to assess India's new coalition government. There is nothing like face-to-face contact to see and feel India's dynamism. The visit helped repair the hurt feelings and lingering suspicions of the major non-NATO ally fiasco the previous March. This was also the first high-level defense visit since India had announced that it planned to refurbish its air force with the purchase of 126 multi-role fighter aircraft. I appealed to Secretary Rumsfeld to reconsider the Defense Department's irritating decision not to display any high-end fighter aircraft at India's second biannual Bangalore Air Show. Happily, within a month after his visit, Secretary Rumsfeld authorized the presence of two US F-15 fighters, which stole the show in Bangalore.

Secretary Rice's first visit to India was set for March 2005. The thoughtful preparation of this visit and the secretary's deft presentation of a new initiative for India caught the Indian government by surprise. With the NSSP process nearing completion, the visit was defined by the need for a new, ambitious initiative with India. In a surprisingly visionary statement, President Bush declared that the United States was prepared to support India's vision of becoming a great economic power. India's annual growth had surged to near 9 percent, which, if sustained over a period of years, would raise India to be one of the world's top three economies and at the highest levels of economic power.

In my public speeches and private conversations with Indian officials, I set out what India needed to become a great economic power. If India were to sustain growth in the range of 9–10 percent consistently over the next ten to twenty years it would achieve its global vision and substantially alleviate its vast poverty. There existed, however, four major





Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice speaking at Roosevelt House, March 16, 2005, during a visit to India to convey President Bush's willingness to engage in negotiations between the United States and India on a possible civil nuclear agreement. Also pictured are Ambassador David Mulford and Jeannie Mulford. *US Embassy New Delhi/CC BY-ND 2.0*

constraints that India would have to overcome to reach its destination. The country would have to build world-class infrastructure across the full range of its economy, diversify its energy base to enhance its capacity for growth, reduce its dependence on imported oil and domestic coal, and transform its rural economy, home to some seven hundred million people, to raise growth levels substantially in its agricultural sector. Each of these broad constraints were, of course, composed of many macro- and microeconomic and social themes, but I believed that grouping the constraints into broad challenges would render India's task more manageable and easier to portray in political terms.

For the United States to become a credible strategic partner for India, we would need to make a vital and concrete contribution in one of the

three broad areas of constraint. Obviously, US companies could and would be investors in India's infrastructure projects, but we would be one of many in a complex field that requires private-sector commitments of long duration. The United States had already played an important part in India's "green revolution" in its agricultural sector, but transforming India's rural economy was a challenge far exceeding just agriculture. Dozens of other challenges relating to this vast enterprise were well beyond the reach of the United States.

This left the diversification of India's energy base, where it might be said that the United States held the "magic key." This key was civilian nuclear energy, a field of high priority in India but one in which India had been isolated from the world for more than thirty years by its unwillingness to sign the 1974 nuclear nonproliferation treaty and by its nuclear tests. The sanctions imposed by the United States against India as a result of its 1998 nuclear test had increased India's isolation from the world. This meant that India was limited in its ability to scale up its industry by its inability to attract investment and technology from outside the country, and also by its lack of any sizable uranium supplies within India, which had handicapped but not prevented India from developing its own limited civil nuclear capacity. In 2005 nuclear power generated approximately 2.5 percent of India's total supply of electricity. India might be hampered in its efforts to expand its civil nuclear industry, but it was not rendered powerless to gradually expand its domestic production. India had also developed its own strategic nuclear weapons as a deterrent against both Pakistan and China. India's nuclear capabilities were accomplished without inward or outward proliferation, and so in spirit India had complied with many of the rules of the 1974 treaty without being a signatory. Signing the treaty would have prevented India from developing its own nuclear weapons and required it to give up its existing weapons if it had elected to sign the treaty after 1998. Given the tensions with its two neighbors, Pakistan and China, both nuclear powers, this was out of the question.

India's exclusion from the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime meant that India's limited but growing civil nuclear facilities were not

covered by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards that applied to other signatories of the treaty. Thus, if the United States were to make an exception for India in US nuclear nonproliferation policy, India would be in a position to significantly diversify its energy base away from heavy dependence on foreign oil and dirty domestic coal supplies. The growth needed for India to achieve its goals of economic development and a rising economic status in the world at large would require a huge increase in electric power over the next twenty years. If coal were its chief resource for electric power, India would become one of the world's great economic powers and also the biggest polluter of the environment.

An expression by the United States of its willingness to consider altering its nuclear nonproliferation policy would be a radical departure from US nuclear policies of the previous fifty years, something not remotely expected in India from the approaching visit of Secretary Rice. Condoleezza Rice was in every way a figure who appealed to Indians. She was self-made, accomplished in several fields, elegant, optimistic, charming, incisive, and highly intelligent. She received a warm welcome, including from the US mission, where she made a special effort to meet embassy staff and their families in Roosevelt House garden.

Instead of the usual get-acquainted visit that reviewed existing policies without breaking new ground, Secretary Rice had prepared carefully for this visit. She understood that if the United States were to genuinely convince India of its intention to help it achieve a place among the leading world powers, we would require a concrete, forward-looking agenda. Moreover, she understood that our agenda needed to be visionary, optimistic, and play to India's own unique sense of destiny.

Secretary Rice's proposal that we should consider working together to address India's isolation from the world of civil nuclear technology so that India could diversify its energy base over time and expand the scale of its civil nuclear industry took the Indians completely by surprise. Secretary Rice issued an invitation for discussions on behalf of the president, not a finished proposal. This invitation, which created a vision for a future achievable only with the sponsorship of the United

States, utterly disarmed the Indians of their habitual doubts and suspicions. Indeed, two days after Secretary Rice had left India one had the impression that the implications of this surprising proposal were only just beginning to sink in. We had clearly changed the tenor of relations, and try as the Indians might to retain their usual detachment there was a genuine and unmistakable enthusiasm that they could not suppress.

Preparations began for Prime Minister Singh's July 2005 state visit to Washington. Both India and the United States began to reflect on how such a nuclear initiative might be carried out. On India's side there would have to be a willingness to separate its civil nuclear activities from its strategic nuclear defense program. This was no easy matter, since civil and strategic nuclear development in India was one and the same. Also, although India had a clean record of nonproliferation, it did not follow the established regime of international safeguards on nuclear facilities or conform to the standards within the group of forty-five member states making up the Nuclear Suppliers Group. India was not open to IAEA inspections or potentially intrusive US demands for compliance in highly technical areas of civil nuclear activities.

The president understood and accepted that there was no possibility of India giving up its nuclear weapons and signing the nuclear nonproliferation treaty of 1974 in order to gain better access to civil nuclear technology. India had developed its own nuclear weapons and modest civil nuclear industry itself. Its nuclear science community occupied a special place of respect and financial support within the Indian government. Accommodating this mandate would, we believed, require a change in US law, which would call into question the sanctity of the world's nuclear nonproliferation architecture. These possibilities raised deep problems for the United States, which had sponsored, developed, and defended that architecture since the 1950s. The US bureaucracy and the staff of relevant members of Congress had spent their entire careers building, perfecting, and enforcing the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Still, the discussion between the United States and India proceeded. I was blessed with certain members of my staff who were knowledgeable



Arrival ceremony on the White House lawn for the state visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, July 18, 2005. On this day the United States and India announced the launch of the Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative. *Official White House photo by Lynden Steele, courtesy of George W. Bush Presidential Library*

on nuclear subjects, and from them I was able to glean a valuable education. We had discussed the civil nuclear area before the secretary's visit to India as a means to help meet India's energy requirements, but once the subject was opened for serious consideration the potential complexity for resolving major political and legal problems became evident. Nevertheless, we engaged with the Indians to determine whether any such vision could realistically be framed for the state visit to Washington of the prime minister in July.

As we worked, a new political dimension took shape in India. Indian intellectuals, some retired foreign policy officials, the large population of New Delhi think tankers, and the leftists in the political arena began to raise the sinister possibility that the new US-India civil nuclear initiative was a plot by the United States to entice India into an arrangement that would cripple or remove India's strategic nuclear capability. This was



the “back door” through which the United States would subvert India’s strategic nuclear weapons program. They argued that the American strategic partnership proposal was designed to bind India helplessly to the United States. This theme gradually took hold in some quarters in India and later became a serious threat to the entire enterprise.

But first we had to reach a preliminary agreement that would permit the long and complicated negotiation that must follow to move forward. Not surprisingly, the turning point came at the state visit by Prime Minister Singh to Washington on July 18. After weeks of discussion and negotiation we had reached an impasse around midnight the night before the beginning of the state visit. The two sides left the meeting resigned to failure. At six the following morning, the Indians called to propose one last effort. Two hours later the final issue was resolved, and work began on a brief vision statement to be issued by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh announcing that the United States and India would move ahead with the negotiation of an agreement that would open the world of civil nuclear commerce to India. Final preparation of an agreed text was still in progress as the two leaders stood before the assembled media in the White House East Wing.

Reaction was mixed. The vision statement was read with much enthusiasm in India, but to many in the US media, Congress, and the US bureaucracy, the statement raised more questions than it answered. Chief among them was, why had the United States taken such a radical step into a field that for many observers was fraught with complexities, poorly understood by politicians and the public, and possibly dangerous for global security? The questions and arguments that had surfaced in India after the visit of Secretary Rice were now raised in the United States. It would be many months before the vision outlined in the joint statement would be tested between the two countries and placed for a vote before the US Congress.

However, before we could make a serious beginning, we had to clear another hurdle. Following a worldwide diplomatic effort by the United States in August and September 2005, a vote took place in the IAEA in which for the first time India voted with the United States



President George W. Bush (front left) and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (front right) meet in the White House Oval Office on July 18, 2005. Among those present are (behind the president, seated left to right) Vice President Dick Cheney, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Ambassador David Mulford, and Under Secretary of State Nicholas Burns. They sat with members of the India delegation, including Ronen Sen, India's ambassador to the United States (seated furthest back on the right). *Official White House photo by Eric Draper, courtesy of George W. Bush Presidential Library*

and others to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council for consideration of a resolution on sanctions.

The IAEA vote was a major foreign policy decision for India. Its relations with Iran went back over thousands of years. The Mughal invasions of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries had come from Persia and had left a pervasive influence on India's life and culture, including India's nearly 150 million Muslims. India invariably exercised extreme care in its dealings with Iran. On Iranian nuclear matters India's position had been that Iran, having signed the nonproliferation treaty (India had not), should honor its obligations under the treaty. India

also indicated that it did not favor Iran developing nuclear weapons. These general expressions had never resulted in India actually taking positions against Iran in international forums. On the contrary, India was distinctly soft on Iran.

One could understand why—Iran was important in India's politics. Apart from historic and cultural links, India's large Muslim population was deeply sensitive to issues that appeared to disadvantage Iran or pushed the government of India to take steps unfriendly to Iran. A large portion of India's Muslim population was Shi'ite, with sizable concentrations in northern India, where despite still being a minority they could exercise very considerable electoral influence. It was common to hear people declare that India had a relationship with Iran going back five thousand years, whereas India's relations with the United States were only a few years old. Others, while acknowledging the long-standing relationship, felt that little in the way of concrete benefits had come from Iran. Additionally, at the time of the campaign for an Iranian sanctions vote, a grand energy project was taking shape on India's northern horizon. This was the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline proposal, which visualized massive supplies of Iranian gas being piped across Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. Despite the obvious practical and political difficulties of such a venture, there was no doubt that the vision had strong political appeal. Pakistan would require new sources of gas within a few years to feed its domestic utility industry, while India was looking for ways to reduce its dependence on imported oil. Beyond the diversification of India's energy base, there was the dream by some of a vital cooperative venture that would bring the principal countries more closely together.

Opposition to this project carried significant political costs in Indian politics, and not just in the Muslim community. Alternatively, supporters of the pipeline enjoyed a costless political boost unlikely ever to be put to the test of geographic and operational practicality. Inconveniently, however, US legislation in the form of the Libya and Iran Sanctions Act of 1996 required the United States to impose sanctions on any investment project that provided significant assistance to Iran in the development of its natural resources. This legislation, which had



never been employed, was used in India as an example of the arrogant extraterritorial reach of US law into the domestic affairs of other sovereign nations. On the other hand, some members of Congress argued that the law might need to be applied to any such pipeline if India were to become too cozy with Iran, needlessly creating resentment in India and a distraction from the US effort on sanctions. The IAEA vote to refer Iran's case to the Security Council brought these matters into the foreground in both countries. The United States was considering a historic change in its nuclear nonproliferation policy that would provide India with a unique global position in the field of civil nuclear commerce, while permitting de facto recognition to India's nuclear weapons. The pipeline initiative, which appeared to favor Iran in the energy field and might very well violate existing US legislation, was bound to be resented in Congress. Failure by India to stand with the United States on an issue as sensitive as Iranian sanctions would draw attention to the pipeline and clearly undermine support for India's civil nuclear initiatives, both in the administration and in Congress. "Playing footsie" with Iran at this point in time was simply unacceptable to many members of Congress, no matter how many centuries of friendship India had shared with Iran.

Critical and threatening comments from members of Congress, together with reminders that under US law Indian companies could face sanctions if they were to advance the gas pipeline with Iran, were held up in India by opposition politicians and even members of the coalition government as unacceptable interference in Indian domestic affairs. This, they argued, is what a strategic relationship with the United States would lead to. The civil nuclear agreement was portrayed as nothing less than the thin end of a US wedge that would subvert India and lead to a "backdoor attack" by the United States on India's strategic weapons program.

The task of navigating these complex and emotional issues without provoking a rupture in relations fell to me. It was vital to strive for clarity on these matters with the Indian government so that the risks, which could not be controlled by the administration, would not

overwhelm the basic interests on both sides. However, as frequently is the case with parliamentary governments, there is a tendency to forget or refuse to recognize the realities of the US form of government. The power of the executive in the United States is limited in its ability to direct or discipline the Congress. An administration might favor a particular policy initiative but find that congressional opposition makes it impossible to realize. Hence, some Indians might well believe that an administration that has agreed on a certain policy direction with India would subvert that policy by secretly encouraging opposition in Congress or using its influence to make Congress its stalking horse for the negotiation of concessions or simply to interfere in India's domestic affairs. There was virtually no limit to the range of interpretations and allegations of bad faith applied to the United States in India's media, in its think tanks, and in the parliament. Leftist parties, in particular, seized on the most extreme arguments to attempt to derail both the civil nuclear negotiation and the growing strategic relationship with the United States.

In the Foreign Ministry and the prime minister's office, relations remained polite and essentially constructive, but one could not say relations were comfortable and happy. In my many meetings with Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran I tried simply to explain in the clearest terms the risks India would be running if it were to abstain or to vote against sanctions on Iran. Reports of arm twistings portrayed in the press were unfair. The underlying realities for India may have been unpalatable at the time, but it was essential that they understand and believe the downside they would face going forward on the civil nuclear initiative if India were unwilling at this critical point in time to stand up for sanctions on Iran. Once that message was firmly and convincingly conveyed to the Indian government, it was my view that they were likely to make the right decision; but, more important, it had to be their decision and their decision alone. This strategy was adopted by Secretary Rice and in turn by President Bush when he met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at the UN meetings in New York in September 2005. Whatever the twists and turns of Indian politics, the prime minister could not have been

under any illusions about the importance of the test India faced in the UN vote.

In September India voted for sanctions on Iran for the first time and thereby strengthened its credibility on nuclear affairs with both the administration and Congress. This was not an easy decision for India. I came away more convinced than ever of India's serious intentions to stay the course on civil nuclear commitments and to continue building a strategic partnership with the United States.

\* \* \*

A second initiative launched by President Bush and Prime Minister Singh at India's state visit in 2005 has survived from one administration to the next. This is the CEO Forum, which brings together ten CEOs from each country to form a business council to determine and seek to resolve the five or six most serious barriers to expanding economic relations between the United States and India.

I had decided to run a mission in India that was open to and supportive of US business. Many American companies were already represented in India, but the rules and regulations that governed foreign direct investment made entry and operation difficult. Some companies, such as General Electric, had large and successful investments in India, but other companies were engaged in disputes with joint venture partners or faced political resistance to growing their businesses.

India's lack of a comprehensive infrastructure was a major deterrent to investment and development. Without intellectual property protection, clear ground rules for the settlement of disputes, and transparency and fairness in dealings with state governments and the bureaucracy in general, foreign direct investment was constrained. My idea of a CEO Forum involved more than simply bringing businessmen together. I had seen other such business groups in Saudi Arabia, Europe, and China, and in every case the fact that the forum or commission was run by governments rendered them largely ineffective over time. The level of corporate participation tended to decline, because governments had



India-US CEO Forum meeting at the State Department, September 22, 2011. Seated at back, left to right, are Suneeta Reddy, managing director of Apollo Hospitals Group, India; Anjalit Singh, founder and chairman of Max Group, India; Timothy Geithner, US secretary of the Treasury; William J. Burns, US deputy secretary of state; Pranab Mukherjee, finance minister of India; and Geoffrey R. Pyatt, US principal deputy assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs. *US Department of State*

little feel for the kinds of commercial and political challenges faced by businesses, challenges often designed or imposed by the governments themselves.

I therefore sought to form a group open only to CEOs responsible for leading the entire company, the final arbiters of global strategy and allocation and deployment of the company's global capital. I stood firm on the principle that we accept no substitutes for attendance at meetings, no matter how august that replacement person's corporate title might be. A chairman drawn from each country was responsible for running the forum. Ministerial-level government officials were invited to take part in meetings, but government bureaucracy should

not manage the meetings or the process leading up to the meetings. Finally, American participants were chosen selectively and invited to join by the American ambassador, instead of issuing an open invitation to companies at large. Preparations and secretariat functions were carried out by the private-sector leaders, not by US or Indian officials. In this way the meetings encouraged free, frank, and off-the-record exchanges of views. I believed that if we achieved these objectives, neither businessmen nor government ministers would feel constrained or feel exposed by the group's deliberations.

After a good deal of irritating wrangling with our own government officials and lawyers in Washington, we were able to achieve virtually all our objectives, avoiding the bureaucratization of the forum. The kickoff meeting at the White House in July 2005 brought the twenty invited members together to become acquainted and to see the serious attention given to the forum by the two heads of government. William Harrison, CEO of JPMorgan Chase, and Ratan Tata, chairman of the Tata Group in India, were the first chairmen of the group. Afterward, the forum convened approximately every nine months. Three senior cabinet ministers from each side attended each meeting and engaged in the kind of informal dialogue that captured the attention of the CEOs and made it possible to air sensitive business issues between the United States and India. No compromising reports appeared in the press. CEOs on both sides were able to get better acquainted, which advanced relations more effectively than formal dialogue.

\* \* \*

The US-India civil nuclear initiative, launched in July 2005 during Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's state visit to Washington, was a complex and controversial undertaking that would require years of focused effort, patience, and faith. By the end of 2005, it was clear to me that we had embarked on a historic enterprise whose magnitude and intricacy constantly seemed to unfold before us. In autumn, when visiting Washington, I called on a number of members of Congress whose

support was needed for the expected legislative process. I was discouraged to find that the most common reaction to my visit was, "Why on earth have you done this?" To those with knowledge of the nuclear nonproliferation regime the United States had championed for over fifty years, it seemed inconceivable that the administration should be willing to give de facto recognition to India's nuclear weapons and at the same time provide India full access to the world of civil nuclear commerce. After all, apart from the Big 5 nuclear powers, all other signatories of the 1974 treaty had agreed to deny themselves nuclear weapons in order to have full access to civil nuclear technology and commerce.

Those views were fueled by Washington's nuclear nonproliferation "establishment," whether in congressional staff, the executive departments, or in the think tank community. These people had both passion and extensive in-depth knowledge of nuclear materials, weapons, technologies, and the history and intricacies of nuclear diplomacy. To many of them, President Bush's civil nuclear vision for India was a dangerous misadventure.

We faced a formidable challenge to explain and justify to Congress the president's proposed change to the world's nuclear nonproliferation architecture. The task of gaining support in the US government and among the Nuclear Suppliers Group of nations was divided into two stages. The first was to lay out the case for India to be brought into the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime. India was clearly a rising nation whose population represented approximately one-sixth of humanity. It had its own homegrown community of nuclear scientists who had developed both a modest civil nuclear industry and sophisticated nuclear weapons. India had not engaged in nuclear proliferation activities and was acknowledged to have observed the standards of the 1974 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, despite being isolated for some thirty years for its failure to sign the treaty. Nor had India, the world's largest democracy, shown itself to be militarily aggressive beyond its borders. China and Pakistan, India's two nuclear-armed neighbors, both of whom fought a war with India in the past fifty years, were still regarded as major threats to India's security. There was no realistic

prospect that India would give up its nuclear weapons capability to gain access to the world of civil nuclear commerce, especially since doing so would require India to accept IAEA nuclear safeguards on its domestic nuclear industry. Finally, India had a clear need to enhance and diversify its energy base. Over time India would clearly become one of the world's leading economies. If it were to depend entirely on its national supplies of coal to generate the power it would need for development, India would also become the world's largest polluter.

In the face of these realities, our conclusion was that keeping India isolated from the world was both unrealistic and a threat to the world's present nonproliferation regime. If isolated, India's nuclear industry would develop its growing body of reactors without being covered by IAEA safeguards. Better to have India's future civil nuclear reactors covered by international safeguards than to leave all of India's nuclear facilities entirely outside the system. India had already demonstrated that its strategic nuclear program had been kept to a scale sufficient for deterrence purposes as opposed to being a growing arsenal for foreign aggression. In future, India's nuclear science community would clearly be able to make an important contribution in global nuclear affairs, which today in its isolation was beyond reach.

In the face of these arguments, we posed the following question: If you acknowledge that India is a major nation of rising world importance, and you don't like this plan, what is your proposal for dealing constructively with India? The response to this question was usually silence or, sometimes, to keep India outside the system, because the risks and costs of entry were just too high.

The second step was to educate Congress on the procedures and specific conditions required of India in order to be granted the exception that would incorporate them into the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime. The first requirement would be that India negotiate a credible arrangement to separate its civil nuclear industry from its strategic nuclear program. This needed to be framed into a formal separation agreement between the United States and India that Congress could approve as part of the process to amend the Atomic Energy Act



of 1954. The separation agreement would specify, among other things, that Indian reactors already built and operating, as well as those to be built in the future, would be covered by international nuclear safeguards to be negotiated and implemented between India and the IAEA.

Because India's nuclear industry had been developed by its scientific community as a single united industry, separating the civil and strategic elements of the industry was both complex and very costly. The division within the industry had to be verifiable, as would the application of nuclear nonproliferation safeguards. The application of safeguards also had to follow nuclear fuel and spent fuels to safeguard against potential leakage from the civil to the strategic side of the industry.

Once the separation agreement was completed the next step was to approach Congress for an amendment to the Atomic Energy Act. This change would permit the United States to conduct civil nuclear commerce with India, provided that certain other actions were completed. The first of these was the US-India Section 123 Agreement, which would be a bilateral agreement providing for the implementation of US-India nuclear cooperation. In addition, following the completion of the 123 Agreement, India and the IAEA in Vienna would negotiate a freestanding bilateral safeguards agreement that would set the arrangements for the introduction of safeguards into India's civil nuclear industry. Finally, the forty-five nations of the Nuclear Suppliers Group needed to agree by full consensus to recognize and accept the exception granted to India by the change in US law. Bear in mind that many of these countries had denied themselves nuclear weapons in order to access civil nuclear technologies. India, on the other hand, which had never signed the 1974 treaty, would gain access to civil nuclear commerce without giving up its nuclear weapons. Thus, the amendment of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 would represent only the beginning of a process which, if completed in full, would allow the United States to ratify the agreement permitting India full access to the world of civil nuclear commerce.

Setting out these rigorous and lengthy steps, which required many months of vigorous negotiation and in the later stages very considerable



international diplomacy, brought a measure of comfort to many of those who were skeptical of the president's civil nuclear vision for India. Yet most participants and observers did not believe an agreement could be accomplished. A number of times, often for long periods, the vision seemed to be impossible to achieve. The detractors were then out in force in India, America, and the international community at large.

Altogether, the negotiation process for the US-India civil nuclear initiative required nearly four years. It was a constant and continuous part of my life as ambassador, since most of the ongoing discussion and much of the negotiation took place in New Delhi. President Bush visited India in March 2006, Congress had its first votes on the amendment of the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 in July and December 2006, and we negotiated the US-India 123 Agreement for most of 2007. Not until the middle of 2008, when many thought the opportunity to complete the agreement had been lost, did we move toward the conclusion.

Meanwhile, in the period from 2005 to 2008 it would have been a mistake to place too much weight on the US-India civil nuclear initiative, because for most of that period it was doubtful that the agreement could be successfully completed. Past efforts to negotiate similar agreements with Japan and China had taken up to ten years and did not involve the magnitude of policy and legal changes that the Indian deal required. In India, one had to face the reality that the left parties in the coalition government were deeply hostile to the initiative. Media commentators and think tank pundits were suspicious of US motives. The debate went on, rising in intensity at each small step forward. For me it was vital that this standoff not dominate our relations. There was too much to do, too many challenges, and too much dynamism in our growing relationship to let civil nuclear power issues interfere.

The rich diversity in US-India relations became more apparent with each passing month. Visitors streamed in from the United States: congressional delegations, officials from virtually all the major departments and agencies of the US government, business leaders, presidents and trustees of American universities, philanthropists, artists, and entertainers. The flow of Indians to America also multiplied dramatically as

more business leaders and their employees visited the United States. India's student population in America rose to seventy-five thousand and on to ninety-four thousand, the largest foreign-student community in the United States by a substantial margin. Government officials traveled to Washington frequently, and many Indian families chose America for their holiday travel. Visas processed by the US mission climbed to a peak in excess of eight hundred thousand per year, second in the US system only to Mexico, with whom we had a common border and long-standing economic relations. India was also the world's leading user of H-1B employment visas.

India was getting broader and more frequent coverage in the US and international press. Tourism began booming as millions discovered "Incredible India." The stage was set for a program to educate Americans about rising India. It seemed to Jeannie and me that the world was coming to India. At the embassy and Roosevelt House we met with countless delegations and visitors of all kinds and gave personal briefings to hundreds of visitors. I discovered that in the more than sixty congressional delegations I met with over five years, the vast majority of members of Congress, even those who had served multiple terms, had never visited India before. Most visitors were struck by India's dynamism and by its potential as a serious friend and partner of the United States. As time passed and the list of influential visitors grew larger, I realized that a campaign for a better understanding of India in the United States would be critical to winning support for the US-India civil nuclear initiative, not to mention support for foreign direct investment and institutional investment flows, defense sales, and cooperation in education, science, and technology. As 2005 turned to 2006 there seemed to be no limit to the opportunity to expand and deepen US-India relations.

The other purpose in cultivating support was to maintain the flow of funds for US AID's widespread and effective social and economic programs. I was a long-time skeptic of US AID, which remained a formidable bureaucracy. However, I found that in India AID programs in the fields of agriculture, power, water, women's rights, and health were

effective and valuable, especially from social and economic returns on the relatively small amounts invested. I also found AID's people in India to be of high quality and committed to their projects.

AID's projects were effective because they addressed innovative necessities in India's economy. AID promoted and provided minimal financial support to, for example, a project to provide a farming community with insulated, antitheft electric power lines (a large amount of electricity in India is stolen directly from power lines), and financial support for the purchase of modern water pumps. With insulated power lines, a constant supply of electricity was assured so that the water pumps could be turned on and off as needed, instead of being left on day and night in case electricity became available. Throughout rural India, in areas where free electricity was promised by politicians, electricity was available only from time to time. In the rural AID scheme I visited near Delhi, the steady supply of electricity had to be paid for by the farmers, who also financed their own new pumps. Contrary to the common belief that people would not pay for electricity, these farmers paid 99 percent of their billings for the certainty of electric power and the ability to control their watering of crops. Beyond the improvements offered to the farmers for watering crops, their village was also electrified. When I visited in midafternoon, the women of the village were gathered in a classroom learning to read and write. Before the new electric program the afternoon hours of daylight would have been used for household chores. Now these were done in the evening under electric lighting so they could go to class in the afternoon. Electric bills in the village were paid 99 percent of the time. This obviously important demonstration project showed that electric power could be commercialized at the village level and rendered economically and socially effective. Instead of embracing this successful model, large parts of India's agricultural sector remain steeped in poverty and illiteracy, waiting for free power that never comes.

I regarded programs of this type as outstanding investments that gave the AID staff a place at the table for planning and financing such projects, often conceived by AID itself. India was a country "on the

feed” for such ideas, and yet the State Department chose this moment to cut funding drastically on all projects apart from health care projects mandated by Congress. The AID budget fell from \$150 million to approximately \$80 million in two years. Large numbers of irreplaceable AID employees were terminated just as they were in demand as never before for projects in which minimal financial outlays could be leveraged by the rising interest of a population of entrepreneurs.

I lobbied members of Congress to understand that the State Department’s rationale for cutting funds for AID projects in India based on the fact that India’s economy was growing at 9 percent made no sense, because the growth level was confined mainly to urban areas, and India’s seven hundred million rural inhabitants remained desperately poor. I also highlighted the potential for promoting important structural changes in India’s economy.

My colleagues and I were successful to some extent in reversing a modest amount of funding. For my success, however, I was reprimanded in writing by the seventh floor of the department for appearing to be working counter to the purposes of AID’s senior management. The quality of leadership at AID in Washington was abysmal and out of touch with their people in the field. They promised to consult their field officers and promptly failed to do so. We found active support among many members of Congress, and by 2011, two years after I had left India, AID budget levels in India were restored. It was depressing, however, to find that senior State Department officials in the Bush administration were ignorant about how growth and structural economic reforms are accomplished on the ground and why they are so important in a country thirsting for progress.

Other policy areas were equally challenging. I found it was necessary to engage ministers directly, bringing with me key staff members responsible for any particularly difficult policy area, to ensure the access we needed at lower levels of the bureaucracy to carry our business forward. This meant, for example, raising the sensitive issue of India’s poor record on human trafficking and child labor directly with the minister of home affairs. It meant seeing the minister of health on the

campaign to eradicate polio in India and talking to the agricultural minister about US wheat sales and barriers against importing US almonds and other agricultural products. It also meant working with the agricultural minister to allow Indian mangoes into the United States after twenty-five years of futile effort. The defense minister was essential to building confidence in the United States as a supplier of military equipment and weapons following the damaging fallout from US sanctions in 1998. The minister of aviation was key to negotiating and implementing the US-India open skies agreement and the sale of US commercial aircraft to India. The minister of human resources, effectively the minister of education, and the foreign secretary were vital to resolving problems we experienced with the Fulbright Program in India. These followed equally important challenges with the ministries of foreign affairs, science and technology, finance, the Reserve Bank of India, and India's space program, where once again the damage wrought by the 1998 sanctions had to be repaired.

In any case, there was no substitute for a direct personal visit by a US ambassador well informed on the relevant policy issue and ready to follow up with the full resources of the US mission. Nor was there any better tonic for raising morale and commitment among the embassy staff than to be supported by the ambassador and launched at the ministerial level into the Indian government bureaucracy.

\* \* \*

I thought I was doing an important job for my country and that I was also an important person in India. A sense of pride and accomplishment was with me every day. Then I learned true humility and profound admiration for the courage, dignity, and humanity of another person. This person was my wife, Jeannie Mulford, Madame Ambassador, the keeper of Roosevelt House and the love of my life.

In April 2005, during a visit with family in Phoenix, Arizona, Jeannie was discovered to have breast cancer. A young woman of picture-perfect lifetime good health was struck by the most dreaded and most

frightening disease we could imagine. We remained in the United States and took immediate steps to confront the disease. At Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York, Jeannie decided to take aggressive action, despite the cancer not being in an advanced stage, electing to undergo a double mastectomy and breast reconstruction, followed by chemotherapy and Herceptin treatments. We consulted the cancer surgeon and the plastic surgeon who together would carry out the surgeries over the coming months. They were joined by Jeannie's oncologist, and surgery was set for May 19.

We did our best to prepare. Jeannie's two sisters came to New York; Jeannie and I took an apartment and made the decision that we would stay the course in India. After the surgery, I would return to New Delhi, Jeannie's sisters would share staying in New York with Jeannie, and I would return regularly to visit during the chemotherapy treatments. Over the next nine months, Jeannie's sisters, Kathleen in Arizona, and Randee in Colorado, made the incredible and loving commitment to never leave Jeannie alone in New York. They became her guardian angels.

It was not long before the doctors and nurses at Memorial Sloan Kettering knew they had a very special patient: always smiling, unafraid, never a harsh or unkind word, courage and faith beyond imagining. When the surgery was over, Jeannie recovered quickly, and we discovered a maker of wigs for theater and film in Greenwich Village who would take Jeannie's long blond hair and fashion it into a shoulder-length wig. The day Jeannie's long hair was to be cut, the day before the chemo treatments were to begin, it was agreed I would leave for Delhi, as she set off to the hair salon for her first significant haircut since the age of eight. When she saw the result, she broke into laughter while her sister burst into tears, and from the photo I received she did indeed look chic and beautiful.

Twenty-four hours later, when I was back in New Delhi, I received a phone call from Jeannie, who said the chemotherapy had not gone forward. Instead, the cardiologist doctors had focused on a heart anomaly Jeannie had had from birth that was thought to be basically benign. The cardiologist, however, believed that chemotherapy could put a strain on

Jeannie's heart anomaly that could impose a significant risk to her life. It was recommended that Jeannie proceed immediately to the Cleveland Clinic to see a prominent surgeon specializing in heart anomalies.

A day or two later we were on a conference phone call with the surgeons at the Cleveland Clinic, weighing and discussing the results of tests Jeannie had undergone. The decision was that Jeannie would need to undergo immediate open-heart surgery to correct the anomaly. The date was set for June 28, the day after my birthday, which Jeannie insisted on celebrating at an Italian restaurant in Cleveland the night before her surgery.

All the doctors had agreed that there was no time to lose in completing the heart surgery some forty days after the breast cancer surgery, so that chemotherapy could be started by a date in August within ninety days of the original surgery. We stayed together in Cleveland for two weeks, and once again doctors and nurses there saw a kind, calm, and fearless woman face a second great surgical intrusion in the space of a month. A few days later, Jeannie was walking fourteen-minute miles with me in the cool July Fourth weather along Lake Erie.

We left Cleveland for Washington, DC, on July 14. Four days later, Jeannie attended the full day of events at the White House for the state visit of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. That evening she was seated at President Bush's table for the state dinner, looking stunning in a long, high-cut gown with her short, chic hair style. She gave no hint of pain or fatigue and neither asked for nor received special treatment of any kind.

I knew that night, as I had known for two months, that Jeannie was and is the most extraordinarily brave and composed woman I will ever know. She stood through that day and evening for me, for our president and first lady, and for our nation—truly a lady from the great heartland of America.

Chemotherapy began in August and would not finish until mid-January 2006. Jeannie's sisters had never left her alone in New York. I came back from India as often as I could, and together we faced the transformative effects of chemotherapy. We went together to the chemo treatment center, where again it was clear to me that Jeannie's steady kindness and good humor had made her everyone's favorite patient.





State dinner honoring Dr. Manmohan Singh, prime minister of India, and his wife, Gursharan Kaur, on July 18, 2005. Left to right are Ambassador David Mulford, Mrs. Kaur, Laura Bush, Prime Minister Singh, President George W. Bush, and Jeannie Mulford. *Official White House photo, courtesy of George W. Bush Presidential Library*

In August a serious infection required surgical removal of one of her breast inserts. Chemotherapy treatments continued through the fall and lasted to January 18, Jeannie's birthday and also the beginning of the Herceptin treatments, which were to last for a full year. These she vowed to complete in India, where she was determined she would return prior to the state visit of President and Mrs. Bush at the end of February.

My job was to find a hospital in New Delhi that could safely administer Herceptin, a relatively new cancer drug. Jeannie's job was to find and transport a supply of Herceptin, refrigerated and stable, all the way to India. Jeannie came to New Delhi in mid-February, nonstop through London, carrying the Herceptin, and ready to begin the preparations for the state visit. A few days later, the ambassador,



with his eight-member armed security detail, accompanied Madame Ambassador to the Ganga Ram hospital for her treatment, the arrival witnessed by hundreds of Indians gathered around the hospital for outpatient treatment services.

Jeannie carried her supply of Herceptin with her from the embassy clinic for mixing and application at the hospital. A private room was arranged, with a doctor and nurse in attendance. The treatment session was less than perfect the first time, but Jeannie's patience and the respect and kindness she always showed to those around her brought forth the effort to get the treatment process just right.

Everyone was glad to see Jeannie back at post. In part this was because it was by then understood that unlike most previous ambassadors' wives, Jeannie had no personal agenda removed from the mission, no private business interest, no social set she maintained in Delhi. Jeannie was entirely devoted to the mission community and the task of leading and managing Roosevelt House. It had been a lonely place for me and the staff without her for ten months, but now "Jeannie Madame" was back and we would soon be visited by President and Mrs. Bush.

President George W. Bush and First Lady Laura Bush made their state visit to India for three days, beginning February 28, 2006. Advance planning had begun in late 2005 and picked up in intensity in the opening months of 2006. Planning and working with the White House staff, the State Department, and the Secret Service, as well as with all their counterparts in India is a challenge of the first order for any ambassador. In the case of India, the challenge rises to perhaps new levels of complexity and sensitivity. State visits by American presidents receive intense scrutiny from all elements of government and from India's large and extremely active media. Precedents from previous presidential visits are dug up and carefully analyzed and India's complex bureaucracy engages across the board, giving, as I discovered, an American presidential visit that subtle mix of top priority attention with defensive efforts not to create or feed "American exceptionalism."

The sheer magnitude of the US advance team and subsequent official delegation surrounding the president was overwhelming. The

presidential party took over the entire Sheraton Hotel in New Delhi, two dozen vehicles and limousines were brought into India, together with helicopters and backup aircraft positioned at key points around the nation in the event that a rapid or otherwise unusual exit by the president was required. All motor routes expected to be used by the president during his visit were given a close inspection by a helicopter manned by American military a day or two before the visit. Each of these activities conducted in the sovereign state of India needed to be negotiated and approved down to the last detail.

There were moments of entertainment and frustration in the preparation process. When the US Secret Service personnel impressed upon the Indians their sensitivity to the prospect of large crowds gathering, the Indians turned the faces of the US agents pale with the observation that getting a crowd of one million together in India could be accomplished almost anywhere in a few minutes. On the other hand, selecting an interesting location for President Bush's main speech in India and obtaining permission for using such a site was a sensitive and frustrating affair up to the very day of the speech. I was intent that the president not speak in a hotel ballroom or other closed site. He should speak out of doors at a site easily recognizable on television as India. We chose a park encompassing a view of the ruins of an ancient Mughal palace. Still standing, as a backdrop, were the ancient walls and Indian-style turrets and rows of fulsome palms lining an avenue running back to the outer wall and forming the vision before which the president would stand at a single lectern. To the side were views of a Hindu temple, and in the foreground an ancient mosque. This place called Purana Qila was perfect for the vision we wished to convey.

The Foreign Ministry took the position that we could not be permitted to use a national treasure like Purana Qila without setting an uncomfortable precedent for other head-of-state visits. Eventually, it was determined that we could apply to the Indian Department of Antiquities for permission to use Purana Qila, provided the event was organized and sponsored by India's two leading business associations, the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Federation of Indian

Commerce and Industry. When it came to issuing invitations to the selected crowd of some five hundred people, the two Indian federations took the view that only the American ambassador could send out invitations in the name of the United States of America. When the Foreign Office learned that I had designed and sent out the invitations there was a mighty explosion, with accusations of bad faith on our part and the threat that the event would have to be canceled, now just two days before the specified date. Explanations that it was the Indian federations who declined to send out the invitations, deferring instead to the American ambassador, were brushed aside. Several hours later, cooler heads prevailed, and it was explained to me that the Foreign Office would now send out a duplicate batch of invitations that would render my batch inoperable, because an ID number would be printed in one corner without which the invitee would not be permitted through security at this climactic event. I agreed to this new procedure without difficulty, but at a meeting with Foreign Office officials shortly before the event I could not resist reminding them to be sure to bring the right invitation with the correct number so as not to be excluded at the gate. This raised a constrained laugh. The event itself was a major success.

The other event that proved sensitive to arrange for the president in India was his request for a meeting with Indian religious leaders. Despite India's diversity of religions, the president, as a leader with strong convictions of faith, knew that India is a country of widespread religious belief. When President Bush visited China he attended a Christian church service, which caused some modest controversy in China. It was recognized that in India, where a number of major and minor religions are represented, attending a religious service was out of the question. Instead, I proposed that I would bring together a group, if necessary at the embassy, that would be composed simply of influential religious leaders from the various communities. The proposal was met by strong resistance from the Indian Foreign Office on the grounds that such a meeting would be sensitive for them to arrange, and in any case the main religions of India—Hinduism, Islam,



(Far side of table, left to right) Ambassador David Mulford, President George W. Bush, and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice meet with religious leaders in New Delhi, March 2, 2006. *Official White House photo by Eric Draper, courtesy of George W. Bush Presidential Library*

Buddhism, Sikhism, Christianity, and Jainism—generally do not have a single head figure who would widely be seen as the correct and legitimate leader of that faith. Any attempt by the Indian government to bring together such a group would entail endless bickering and possibly strong emotional outbursts. Instead, I proposed that I would bring together a group at the embassy if necessary that would be composed simply of influential religious leaders from the various communities. This the government could not prevent, nor did they try to block such an initiative when they understood that we at the embassy would take the responsibility and would avoid attempting to select the supreme head of one or other of the groups in India.

When the meeting was held it was successful beyond my expectations and I believe beyond those of President Bush. Eight individuals were invited to meet the president: two Hindu leaders; two Muslim

leaders (one Sunni and the other Shiite); a Protestant; a Roman Catholic; one Sikh; and one Buddhist. The tables for the meeting were arranged in a U shape with the president, Secretary of State Rice, and me seated across the top of the U and the religious leaders down each side.

When the religious leaders had been introduced and seated, most of them clutching notes or texts from which to speak, the president preempted any comments from their side by speaking first. He spoke without notes and in a highly personal vein about the importance of his faith in giving him the strength to carry the burden of the presidency. The frank and unguarded passion with which President Bush spoke took the group by surprise, rendering their prepared statements to rather passionless commentary. The president listened patiently and there followed a brief informal discussion. What I recall in particular from that gathering was the concluding remarks of several leaders to the effect that no previous head of state of any country had ever sought them out for a meeting of this kind and how unique and much appreciated was this gesture by President Bush. In my mind's eye I would have been willing to wager that before the meeting, each leader would have ranked as highly improbable any meeting of this nature with President Bush. No such meeting had occurred before with a foreign head of state, and it was generally understood that the schedule for President Bush's visit would be crowded with meetings and events. When the gathering took place, they were shocked by his candor and faith and deeply moved by the consideration he had given them.

The president's official bilateral meetings with the prime minister and other senior ministers at Hyderabad House were in all respects friendly and constructive. The purpose of these meetings, which at times were formal gatherings and somewhat stilted, was to highlight the broad interface of engagement between the United States and India. In the run-up to the visit we had nearly completed negotiations with the Indian government on India's nuclear separation agreement, which would divide India's civil nuclear industry from its strategic weapons program. Several key issues remained to be resolved, the most

difficult of which was the need to meet India's demands for assurances or guarantees from the United States concerning supplies of nuclear fuel to India over the medium to long term. The United States was unwilling and unable under US law to guarantee future supplies to India under all prevailing circumstances. If India were to violate, in the opinion of the United States, future nuclear safeguards applied to India, US cooperation with India would cease immediately. India's fear was that in such circumstances the United States would use its global influence to once again isolate India from fuel supplies, even if the rest of the world had not reached the same judgment as the United States. At Hyderabad House on a sunny and pleasant day the president approved the final draft language, which would be inscribed in the separation agreement and in subsequent agreements to implement US-India civil nuclear cooperation.

At the press conference in the garden of Hyderabad House, the prime minister led off with the announcement that US-India agricultural cooperation, which had powered India's "green revolution" in the 1960s and '70s, was to be restored, with a focus on new technologies. The civil nuclear initiative received intense interest from the media in India and from overseas. By putting cooperation in agriculture first on the press conference agenda, at the request of the prime minister, we had avoided making the civil nuclear initiative the dominant theme and possibly causing division within the coalition. The overall impression following the meetings was that the outcome reflected wide and diverse cooperation between our two countries.

The president's small, informal meeting with Sonia Gandhi, leader of the Congress Party and in effect India's most influential leader, was warm and on policy issues extremely positive. This had not always been the case over the many years of contact between the United States and the Gandhi family.

On the final day of the visit, President and Mrs. Bush flew to Hyderabad for the day. Jeannie and I accompanied them on Air Force One and Marine One for the whole day, and as during the entire visit, the president and first lady could not have been more friendly and gracious





Nicholas Burns (left), US under secretary of state for political affairs, and Ambassador David Mulford during a press conference in New Delhi, December 8, 2006, the day after the US Congress completed final legislation for a landmark civilian nuclear deal with India, removing contentious provisions that had raised objections by the US and Indian governments. *Manpreet Romana/AFP via Getty Images*

to their Indian hosts and to us. We had selected Hyderabad for the one-day visit away from New Delhi because it is a major city in the south of India in one of India's largest and most populous states, Andhra Pradesh. Hyderabad has developed a diverse and rapidly growing economy (especially agriculture, IT, and pharmaceuticals). Its population is 41 percent Muslim (although Andhra Pradesh is only 13 percent Muslim, which is the national average for India), and Hyderabad is home to India's most prestigious modern business school. That evening the president announced that the United States would open a full-service consulate in Hyderabad, the fourth such consulate in India and the first full-service consulate established by the United States in more than twenty years. This project had been developed over a number of months and involved

the sensitive decision of selecting Hyderabad over Bangalore as the location of the new consulate. The thousands of citizens of the city selected who applied for US visas would no longer need to travel to Chennai in Tamil Nadu to make their application.

In the morning the president visited one of India's premier agricultural universities, including a walk through the fields and conversations with the agricultural workers, and in the afternoon he had a highly active two-hour seminar with successful entrepreneurs under the age of thirty-five in the courtyard of the business school. These outings gave the president an opportunity to gauge the dynamism of India, away from the capital, and to meet with India's youthful population of aspiring entrepreneurs.

Finally, there was the style and elegance of the visit. The president's speech at Purana Qila was a masterpiece of atmosphere and presentation. In the soft cool of the evening, and with the effective lighting on the palm tree avenue, the ancient walls behind the president, the Hindu temple, and the sixteenth-century mosque, the elite and discriminating audience was deeply and visibly impressed by the president's uplifting speech, his forceful delivery, and the genuinely friendly demeanor that he so effectively conveyed.

In a single paragraph President Bush perfectly captured the essence of the relationship he and his administration had created with India:

For many years the United States and India were kept apart by the rivalries that divided the world. That's changed. Our two great democracies are now united by opportunities that can lift our people and by threats that bring down all our progress. The United States and India, separated by half the globe, are closer than ever before, and the partnership between our free nations has the power to transform the world.

Likewise, the state dinner set that evening in the Mughal gardens behind the Imperial Palace, now known as Rashtrapati Bhavan. This vast and elegant building, designed by English architect Edward Lutyens



in the 1920s in the great imperial style of India, provided the setting for a spectacular gathering of elegantly dressed Indian glitterati, India's music, and fireworks. It was of course after dark, but the lights that played on the surrounding flowers and flows of water exactly rendered the atmosphere of mystery and romance that lies at the heart of India.

When it came time to see the presidential party off, the president told Jeannie and me that of all the places they had traveled, India was the country they had most wanted to visit and that this had been the best of all their visits. What came through to us and remains with us today from the president's meeting with embassy staff in the garden of Roosevelt House to the state dinner at the Rashtrapati Bhavan was the down-to-earth, genuine kindness and goodwill of the president and first lady toward every person and situation they encountered in India.

\* \* \*

The next phase in the follow-up from the president's state visit to India was the campaign to move forward with the civil nuclear initiative. With India's separation agreement now concluded, we turned to the next and most difficult challenge: the need to amend the US Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to permit India to enter into civil nuclear commerce with the United States. This involved not only a careful review of the separation agreement by both houses of Congress but also a legislative strategy on the part of the administration that would permit a united front to be presented to Congress. There had always been opposition within the executive branch and among staff of both parties on the Hill toward any concessionary change toward India in the global nuclear nonproliferation architecture. Despite the formally declared policy of the Bush administration, we knew we would face internal opposition and acts of resistance in the legislative process.

Congress would support the necessary change in US law only if it were satisfied that the separation agreement we had negotiated with India would effectively separate India's strategic nuclear weapons from its present and future capacity to develop and operate a program

of civil nuclear commerce, subject to the application of international nuclear safeguards. The separation agreement would have to be viewed as water-tight by Congress and later by the IAEA and all forty-five members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.

Draft legislation and the plan for approaching Congress developed over the next three months. The first and most important legislative issue to resolve was whether the proposed legislation that would amend the Act would be India specific or criteria based. The former approach would make only one exception from the global regime by isolating and naming India. The criteria-based approach would lay out the criteria to be met by any country in the future that might seek to be given an exception without requiring a specific change in US law for that country. I was appalled by the second option, because it was the utterly unique nature of India's nuclear history, its track record of nonproliferation, and the fact that it was the world's largest democracy that to me made India the only case for exception in the world, both now and in the future. There were arguments on both sides of the issue, but in general officials in the administration favored the single named exception approach. The other approach would lead to unfortunate possibilities for slippage in the future as other countries with support among groups in Congress or the executive sought to extend India's special and well-deserved advantage to themselves. In the end, the legislation named India as the only country in the law to be provided with a special status.

This, of course, made India's case easier to sell in the Congress, because India stood on its own. There need not be speculation about any other country being given special treatment by virtue of a future bureaucratic decision that a country had somehow met the terms of a body of specified criteria. For any other country to be granted an exception under which it could have a strategic nuclear weapons program, engage freely in civil nuclear commerce with the world, and not be required to sign the 1974 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, the Congress would have to pass a new law. Surely this was better protection for America and the world than leaving such a matter to the decision of a future administration, or worse to a future secretary of state without requiring the formal consent of Congress.

The wording of the legislation also proved to be controversial when brought to bear against the existing wording in the Atomic Energy Act concerning prohibitions against nuclear leakage or proliferation. Legislation in the House was submitted in May; hearings were held but floor action was delayed. Finally, in July, as the congressional summer recess approached, the legislation was voted out of the committee and went to the floor for the vote. This took place on July 26, 2006, and the legislation was carried by 359 votes to 68 votes, a most remarkable triumph by any measure. Members had given India a stunning bipartisan majority, recognizing India's critical importance in the world, its special priority for the United States, and the faith America had in India's capacity to contribute positively to the evolution of the world's nuclear nonproliferation architecture. I was proud of the unity achieved in our House of Representatives, its far-sighted capacity for leadership, and the fact that we had successfully transformed early skepticism into an understanding of India's importance to the United States and the world at large.

The House vote was only the first step, however. We still faced the challenge in the Senate, where conditions for passage would be much more unpredictable and our time clock would be that much more advanced. There were also the forthcoming midterm congressional elections that would dominate the agenda after the summer recess and carry us through November. President Bush's declining approval ratings and the bitter partisan atmosphere promised for the elections seemed to blight prospects for a statesmanlike focus on the case that had to be made to move the US-India civil nuclear initiative forward to the next stage. The Senate's version of the bill was similar to the bill passed by the House in July, but Senate procedures posed a far greater risk of destructive amendments being introduced from the floor, or other amendments that might be well intended but would be unacceptable to India.

The climax of the midterm congressional election campaign in September–October 2006 saw the full force of partisan politics break onto the scene. Any chance of Senate action on the House bill or anything resembling it before the election proved nonexistent. Indeed, we

could hardly imagine any basis on which Republicans and Democrats could find common ground to consider and debate a foreign policy issue as sensitive as altering the world's nuclear nonproliferation architecture to accommodate India in a world of rising concerns about North Korea, Iran, and Iraq. Even if the legislation could theoretically be raised after the election in a "lame duck" session, there would hardly be time for hearings and a vote before the end of the 109th Congress in January 2007. Time was slipping away, and we had not even begun to think about how a 123 Agreement could be negotiated were we to succeed in overcoming the Senate legislative hurdle.

Thanks to the skill of the State Department's legislative affairs people, the active support of the White House, and the leadership of National Security Advisor Steve Hadley and Under Secretary of State Nick Burns, the legislation was brought forward in the December session that followed the midterm election. In the course of floor debate eight potentially damaging "killer amendments" were proposed and defeated. Significantly, several of these amendments were supported by then senators Obama of Illinois and Clinton of New York. When the amendments were defeated and the dust settled, both senators then joined the eighty-two other senators who voted in favor of the Indian civil nuclear initiative. From the distance of New Delhi, and without personal contact with either of the senators, it was impossible to know whether their motivation was to derail the nuclear deal with India or simply to deny President Bush what, if ultimately successful, would turn out to be an important part of his foreign policy legacy. Whatever one's final judgment, the Indians were aware at the time and remain aware today of the reluctant, last-minute support that both these important Democratic Party leaders recorded for the cornerstone initiative of the US-India strategic partnership. It is not surprising to me today that the warmth in relations between the United States and India from 2003 to 2009 has cooled significantly under the Obama administration.

Thus, as the year 2006 drew to a close, Congress had amended the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 to permit India to become the sole exception in the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime: namely, to be

acknowledged *de facto* to be a state with nuclear weapons (as opposed to a nuclear weapons state) that would be permitted full access to the world of civil nuclear commerce without signing the 1974 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty or giving up its nuclear weapons. By the action of Congress, we were authorized to move forward with India to negotiate the 123 Agreement that would set out the bilateral arrangement between the United States and India that would govern our nuclear cooperation. This agreement, if it could be achieved, would also serve as the basis for approaching the IAEA for approval of India's nuclear nonproliferation safeguards and for the comprehensive consensus that would have to be achieved with all forty-five members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (all signatories of the 1974 treaty). Finally, Congress would have to approve the 123 Agreement and all the other arrangements before its legislative action could come into full force.

The Senate vote on the civil nuclear initiative marked the turning point in the US-India civil nuclear initiative. This was the moment when the opponents in the administration knew that they would have to cooperate in the effort to complete the agreement or be forced into open opposition. Until now, they had had the luxury of hiding behind the prospect that Congress would reject the change in law or place it on long-term hold. Instead, the impressive post-election bipartisan majority that materialized in the Senate meant that we would move on immediately to the next phase of negotiation with India of the formidable 123 Agreement.

# 2

## Going the Distance

The American ambassador enjoys a very special position in India that brings with it almost unlimited opportunities to make a real impact on day-to-day relations between the two countries. The combination in one position of ambassador plenipotentiary and chief executive officer of the United States in India comes to mind again. One is almost never alone, never beyond the reach of colleagues, or most government officials, or the multitude of Indians who accord to the American ambassador the most remarkable respect and admiration. This is not a personal matter for which one can or should take credit, but truly a phenomenon inherent in the office and in Indian society. America is deeply respected and greatly admired in India, and its ambassadors are seen, rightly or wrongly, as important people who are the personal representative of the president of the United States. It is a sobering reality and takes some getting used to. It is also humbling and sometimes deeply and unforgettably moving. As time passed, I became more aware of the importance of living up to these expectations and trying to use the respect and goodwill inherent in my position to maximize the impact I could make on the overall US-India relationship. There seemed no end to the daily opportunities for progress.

I grew to love India, or I should say Jeannie and I grew to love India together—the great human kaleidoscope, the place of perpetual activity, color, movement, pathos, chaos, beauty, and reverence for the Creator, the gods of all things, and the exotic mysteries of life. India's seasons were part of its charm, even the blinding heat of the days that would soften in the evening or the chill and fogs of winter. Then there were the perfect days—so many sunny, comfortable days—and India's diverse and exotic wildlife and plants, trees, and flowers, and especially the birds. And also the music, so often bringing peace, and the dancing, whether classical or passionately traditional, was also a part of daily life in India.

We traveled widely in virtually every region and found the people invariably kind, considerate, and polite. At times, I hardly knew how to respond to the respect shown to us, the representatives of America. At country hotels or rest stops, I would often be asked to review the local guard, drawn up in lines, armed with old rifles and commanded by energetic officers shouting out the command to present arms. Or there would be people at airports, relatives or friends of the airport manager, who had requests usually associated with visa aspirations. On one occasion at Udaipur airport a young woman dancer in full costume, who was a member of a traditionalist dance troupe invited to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York, asked that I intervene at the embassy to change the date of her visa interview appointment, because it conflicted with the date set for her computer science final. She presented photos of herself dancing with live fire lanterns balanced on her head.

Jeannie and I developed the humorous phrase between us that “in India it's all about visas.” In fact, by late 2006 the visa process as conducted by the US mission in India had become a significant problem with negative fallout for our image in India. Ambassadors are admonished by the State Department to stay out of the visa business, which as a general rule is sound. For an ambassador to intervene personally in the visa process on behalf of an individual is frowned upon, and I was told, illegal. In India, however, the huge demand for visas to the United States had generated serious problems we needed to address.

By the summer of 2006 the backlog for the visa applications, each of which required a face-to-face interview with a US consular officer, had reached the point where applicants faced a wait of 187 days to be interviewed. For Indian citizens needing to go to the United States for business meetings, weddings, funerals, or school this was an impossible situation, and in many cases it was deeply resented. Despite an express program for certain designated businesses and an effort to move students to the front of the line, the continuing pressure was such that applicants were calling the embassy, including the ambassador, for preferential treatment or paying visa agents with whom the embassy had formal working relationships for earlier-priority interview appointments. In fact, the visa agents were buying blocks of visa appointments and selling them to desperate applicants who could not wait six months for an interview. It was easy to see the scope for abuse or influence in the management of the interview appointments process.

The consular department, however, faced genuine problems that weighed heavily on their people, many of whom were young, first-assignment Foreign Service officers. When one considered that the mission through the embassy in New Delhi and its consulates in Kolkata, Mumbai, and Chennai was processing some eight hundred thousand visa appointments per year, simple math conveys the burden that these officers were carrying. On every business day some thirty-five hundred visa applications had to be processed, each requiring a brief face-to-face interview conducted through the bulletproof glass of a cubicle manufactured and imported from the United States. The pressure on young officers conducting in some cases over a hundred interviews per day after reviewing each applicant's online application was clearly very challenging, especially when it is understood that it was the responsibility of the young officer to accept or reject each application and to affix his or her signature on the bottom line reflecting that decision. This requirement alone tended to encourage a risk-averse attitude, especially among young, inexperienced officers, with the result that rejection rates could often run quite high.



As the delays for processing visas grew longer, I became more uncomfortable with a program that seemed to function in isolation from the rest of the mission and was both defensive and protective of its apparent prerogatives. Admittedly, visa fraud and security legitimately impact the consular department's mandate, but it seemed unreasonable to me that the visa backlog should have built up so dramatically and that reducing it to more reasonable waiting times should be beyond our capabilities.

I therefore took an interest in this specialized field, which few ambassadors pay any more than fleeting attention to, and even then usually on an individual-case basis. To me, the issue of visas to the United States was a service business. We charged each applicant an upfront fee of \$130 to apply, which was not refundable whether the applicant obtained a visa or not. America is an open society, and so long as our security is protected and we are satisfied the applicant does not intend to remain illegally in the United States, we should welcome visitors without imposing excessive bureaucratic constraints on legitimate visitors. Making all applicants wait 187 days to have the interview and receive the final decision seemed to me to fly in the face of our claim that America is an open society.

I began to watch the visa operation—for example, how many windows were open and in use how much of the time? Could we get additional help from Washington in the form of temporary officers? Could we enlist assistance from other qualified officers in different departments in the mission to pitch in and help the consular people? And finally, could we break the systemic practice among agents to hoard and subsequently sell blocks of visa appointments?

In September I convened an offsite meeting in Jaipur for all senior leaders and consular officers in the mission. The idea was to recognize the serious challenge we faced and to expose and discuss solutions to these problems. We also needed to show our young officers that we were concerned about the burdens they were working under and their need to be exposed to other types of work in the mission in order to avoid a condition popularly referred to as “visa burnout.” Above all, we needed to make a mission-wide commitment to removing the visa

backlog and maintaining the waiting period in future at some more reasonable level. I was surprised by the level of support this initiative received. People clearly felt unhappy and defensive about the position we had put ourselves in with the Indian public. We concluded the off-site with a mission-wide commitment to defeat the visa backlog and named the enterprise the “visa blitz.”

Through a combination of measures, extra support from the State Department in Washington, assistance from competent officers from other areas in the mission, and the discovery that by putting out more aggressively a significantly larger number of visa appointments, we broke the back of the visa backlog. This breakthrough was because visa application appointments were usually arranged by applicants through a visa agency. The long backlog of visa appointments had resulted in agents booking blocks of appointments running into the future, which they apparently could sell at a markup to visa applicants desperate for an earlier appointment than the 187-day wait generated by the embassy system. Once we expanded and accelerated our own appointment schedule, we found that “no shows” for appointments rose sharply, thus showing that the system was being gamed and immediately shortening the backlog.

Within three months, the wait for a visa application was down to six days throughout India. In the balance of my time as ambassador the waiting period only rarely exceeded fourteen days. I received a weekly report and graph of the visa application situation, which if deterioration occurred we immediately discussed among colleagues to determine the causes of any change in the visa backlog.

The response from the Indian public was perhaps the most satisfying aspect of the campaign. Positive messages flowed into the mission, and in thanking my colleagues I pointed out that money couldn't buy positive publicity like this for America. The State Department also responded by sending out messages to other missions in the world saying, “If they can do this in India, why can't you?”

There was another rewarding experience of quite a different kind that brought unexpected results still present in India today. After the president's visit Jeannie returned to New York for additional surgery. When she came back to New Delhi she was invited to speak at the New Delhi Women's Press Club with two other prominent Indian ladies who had not spoken earlier about their cancer. Until then we had not considered Jeannie's battle against cancer as anything other than our personal affair. At the Women's Press Club that day in a room filled with TV cameras and press, Jeannie opened a whole new and very surprising world.

By all accounts afterward, Jeannie's deeply personal and emotional remarks "literally took the oxygen out of the room." That such remarks should be given in the Press Club by the wife of the American ambassador in such a simple and direct manner amazed the gathered crowd. We soon understood the reason. Cancer, and breast cancer in particular, is virtually a taboo subject in India for public conversation. Women in India with symptoms of the disease feared to reveal it, either because health problems of other members of the family were given priority by most mothers or because women feared to be ostracized by friends or their extended families.

The nature of marriage in India, especially dowry marriages in rural India, made women particularly vulnerable to adverse health developments that make them a liability to the family. Worse still is talk of families rejecting a woman with breast cancer as a person afflicted in this life with the sins of previous lives.

Whatever the reasons, the outcome was, as we discovered, that women in India do not take preventative steps to detect breast cancer early, and when afflicted with physical signs of cancer they seek to avoid revealing their malady. The result is that stage four breast cancer is all too common, with very high death rates, which in turn strikes fear into the general population, contributing further to the veil of secrecy surrounding this potent disease. An important contributor to this shameful situation, where men in particular can be either insensitive or hostile to women's afflictions, is the shortage of equipment and

clinical facilities for mammogram checkups and other cancer-related services throughout India.

Shortly after the Press Club event, Jeannie was invited to be interviewed on NDTV's *60 Minutes* program. In a ten-minute segment, with quiet, elegant composure, Jeannie spoke to an audience estimated at forty million people spread across India. Here again was the wife of the American ambassador speaking openly and with quiet confidence on this very personal and sensitive subject. Afterward, Jeannie received personal handwritten letters from women in the remotest parts of India, thanking her and blessing her for speaking out on their afflictions. She was invited to be the keynote speaker opening several medical conferences on cancer. She was asked to repeat her testimonial as a breast cancer survivor to the audiences of doctors and technicians, and at each gathering I watched this beautiful, composed woman describe the seven surgeries and chemotherapy treatments she had endured and her plea for greater efforts for social transparency and early detection throughout India. Whenever she spoke there was perfect silence. Doctors and technicians learned that she was not afraid, that she practiced a constant optimism in all phases of the treatments, that she took aggressive measures by choice to combat the disease, that she had no medical advice to give beyond focusing women on self-examination and early preventative measures, and finally that if by speaking she could help one woman in India to successfully defeat breast cancer, her prayers would be answered. Afterward, she was surrounded by doctors and technicians telling her she had given the most important speech of any medical conference.

Among the doctors present at the First Annual Asian Breast Cancer Conference was Jeannie's surgeon from Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York, Dr. Hiram Cody, and an Indian doctor, Dr. Rajeev Ram, of Hyderabad. Jeannie was invited to commemorate the opening in Hyderabad of Dr. Ram's digital mammography center, the first in southern India. She was also asked to open a large pop music concert at Hyderabad's new convention center. I will never forget Jeannie bathed in moving strobe lights, giving her personal testimonial to thousands of young people before the music was permitted to begin.

Lastly, in February 2008, Jeannie was asked to lead the first-ever breast cancer Walk for Life in New Delhi, organized by CanSupport, an Indian NGO headed by Hermala Gupta. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's wife, Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, and Jeannie launched this event together on a chilly sunny morning, accompanied by some five thousand walkers dressed in white and yellow T-shirts. Since then, Jeannie and Mrs. Kaur have kicked off seven consecutive "Walks for Life" in New Delhi, each with a growing number of participants who make the four-kilometer early-morning walk.

This was the surprising and uplifting outcome from Jeannie's struggle with breast cancer. We have both been marked by the wondrous and unexpected consequences of her personal experience and by the fortuitous circumstances that placed her in India at that time, as the wife of the American ambassador, performing a personal gesture of courage, faith, and humility before the countless millions of friendly people in India.

\* \* \*

Perhaps the broadest challenge with implications for India's social and economic progress over the next decade centers on education. Part of the case for India sustaining high growth over the next thirty years rests on its claim to have the largest young population (55 percent of Indians are under the age of twenty-four) among all the major countries of the world. Moreover, India's young people have high aspirations, are desperately keen to obtain an education, are comfortable with technology, and in general are fluent in English. Thus, while China, Russia, Japan, Europe, and even the United States will suffer in the near future from declining populations of young people, India will have the largest, most productive, and youngest workforce in the world at just the right time to propel India's economy forward. This optimistic projection assumes that India successfully educates this bulge of young workers and provides them with jobs and adequate health care. Otherwise, an aspiring body of frustrated young people might prove to be a political liability.

The reality in India today is that India's primary and secondary education systems are sadly lacking in both scale and quality. It is true that education is a top priority for families and that India's elite schools and universities produce large numbers of brilliant students who we see in America in large numbers. But tens of millions of young people are left behind in the Indian education system, and the government's present policies, although improving the situation somewhat, lack the scale and commitment necessary to accomplish the education of this young generation, which will be entering India's workforce in the next few years.

While serving as ambassador I received more than sixty visiting American university presidents, provosts, chancellors, deans, and delegations of boards of trustees who came to India to explore accessing India's giant education market. A group of progressive ministers in the government advocated greater change and the opening of India to foreign universities, which at present are not permitted to enter India on a fully accredited basis to offer their degree programs in-country to Indian students. Although education is a state subject under India's constitution, the federal government plays an overriding role in India's national education policy. The minister of human resources, who was in charge of education at the federal level, successfully resisted the reform efforts by younger ministers during the full term of my service with the result that only now, under the new Congress-led government, is India beginning to consider legislation to open India to foreign direct investment in education. Unless India opens more fully to the outside world and expands its own existing education system it seems doubtful that it can scale up quickly enough to educate millions more of its young people.

My relations with India's minister of human resources were generally unproductive. Minister Arjun Singh was an important but aging political figure who was also a cultural nationalist who strongly opposed entry to India by foreign educational institutions. He also seemed to be opposed to the US-India Fulbright Scholarship Program set up by treaty between the United States and India in 1951 under the leadership of Senator William Fulbright.

India's Fulbright Program had been a major success story over many years. Between the two countries there were thousands of Fulbright alumni, and the program continued to enjoy the prestigious reputation it enjoyed in other parts of the world. Yet major problems appeared under the then current government. These were of two kinds: one was inordinate delays in obtaining the necessary visas for American Fulbrighters coming into India; the other was the fact that some 12 percent of the study programs of foreign Fulbright scholars were denied without explanation. As ambassador, I began receiving letters of complaint from Fulbright participants and in some cases from their families. These complained of delays that greatly inconvenienced Fulbrighters who had resigned from positions, given up appointments or scholarships, or had otherwise put themselves in circumstances inconvenient to them and their families to accept a Fulbright grant in India. I discovered that of the approximately one hundred students and faculty awarded Fulbright scholarships in 2007 more than three-quarters had waited up to a year for a visa and some longer. Others had had their study projects rejected without explanation or appeal. One group of English language teachers had already waited for visas beyond the term of absence agreed with their home school, as well as beyond the portion of the Indian school year during which they were supposed to teach.

When I looked more fully into the problem, I was struck by the casual injustice of the system in India. At the embassy we issued visas to Indian Fulbright students going to America in a single afternoon and did not examine or question their study project in the United States. When I reviewed the American study projects the Indians had rejected, I could see no justification for such sensitivity and the blatant interference with academic freedom. Contrary to the agreed-on timetable that was to govern the program—awards in April and visas to be processed by June—our people were waiting up to nine months for visas and in some cases longer. My staff, who were charged with pressing the Indians to act more quickly, were forced to shuttle between the Ministry of Human Resources and the Ministry of Home Affairs

to discover where the delays were being generated. In the process, I discovered that both the students and my staff were not being treated with the respect and goodwill one would assume should apply to a jointly agreed academic program between two major democracies. Finally, I discovered (as most anyone in the State Department already knew) that since 1951 the United States had itself paid for the entire US-India Fulbright Program, whereas in virtually all other countries with a Fulbright Program the host country contributed up to half of the funds required to operate the program.

After months of effort with the Foreign Ministry as well as with the two ministries charged with running the program, it was clear that without firmer action we would not clear the visa backlog and resolve the interference by the Indians with the content of the study programs. I also found a distinct lack of willingness in our own State Department to push the Indians more aggressively.

We had reached a point where determined action was required. Such action brought forward by the ambassador might succeed in resolving the problem, or it might seriously strain relations between the two countries at the expense of the ambassador's reputation. I had reached the point, however, where I felt it was intolerable that American Fulbrighters should be so blatantly discriminated against, that we should seem to accept interference with the academic freedoms implied in the Fulbright Program, and that we should continue to pay all of the program's costs, as we had these past fifty-two years, in a country clearly able to afford some financial contribution. Indeed, if the Indians continued to enjoy a free ride on Fulbright there was every reason to believe they would make little effort toward reforms.

I decided to take several steps that I hoped would restore the prestige of the Fulbright Program and lead to its expansion as a premier vehicle for education and better understanding between India and America. I began by writing a letter in early 2008 to the newly selected Fulbright scholars, saying in effect, congratulations for being awarded a Fulbright, but please be aware that this could be bad for your health. The letter went on to explain the problems we had been having with the Indian



program, so that no new Fulbrighter would be unaware of the potential inconvenience they might face.

The next step was to call on the foreign secretary, Mr. Shankar Menon, who was invariably friendly and had himself made a significant effort to clear up the process problems with the ministries of human resources and home affairs. The Foreign Ministry's efforts, though welcome, had been only marginally effective. Mr. Menon was very supportive of the Fulbright Program and understood its importance to India over the past half century. But entrenched bureaucracy is difficult to overcome anywhere and especially perhaps in India. I showed Mr. Menon the letter I had sent, which he found rather shocking, and proposed that in the next months we should work together to achieve the following objectives. The first was to remove the visa backlog and to stop the practice in India of rejecting the study programs of Fulbright scholars. The second was to amend the original Fulbright Program agreement to provide for India to expand the program by paying half of the finances each year. And, finally, that we should amend the agreement to permit private-sector parties to contribute to the program. If we could not achieve the first two objectives, I indicated that my inclination would be to suspend the program until its problems could be fixed.

This meeting marked the turning point for transforming the Fulbright Program into a true US-India partnership. Thanks to the intervention of Mr. Menon, the visa backlog began to shrink, study programs stopped being rejected out of hand, and we began the dialogue that would result in India agreeing to finance half the program by matching the amount contributed annually by the United States. They also agreed to permit private solicitations of resources. The outcome was a doubling of the Fulbright Program from approximately 130 grants (covering both Indians going to the United States and Americans coming to India) to close to 300. In the future, if private resources could be enlisted, I saw no reason why the program could not in due course grow to a thousand scholars each year.

The Fulbright Board in India was reconstituted to incorporate higher quality, more enthusiastic people who were willing to consider

greater diversification of the study content of the program. I successfully advocated for the program to move away from too heavy a focus on literature and culture to include technology and agricultural science.

When Mr. Menon and I signed the amended agreement in 2008 at a small luncheon at Hyderabad House I could not have been more pleased. The experience with Fulbright perfectly reflected the dynamic of the US-India relationship and the mix of official bilateral and private civil society interests. It is this aspect of our relations that causes me to believe so firmly in the future our two nations will share.

Two other experiences intervened in my last two years that left an indelible mark on Jeannie and me. The first was our visit to His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. He is a most remarkable individual, and Dharamsala is a unique replica of Tibet. The United States has supported the Tibetan community in exile for many years, especially by funding and supporting various kinds of schools for orphans and other children left by parents who brought them over the mountains from Tibet to leave them in freedom at Dharamsala. The extraordinary presence of His Holiness pervaded the entire Buddhist community in Dharamsala and not surprisingly accompanies His Holiness wherever he goes in the world.

Our other experience came with the responsibility the US ambassador to India has for the Kingdom of Bhutan. Formal relations between the United States and Bhutan have never been established, but the US embassy in New Delhi is responsible for US visa services and other matters for Bhutanese citizens, and the ambassador is required to visit Bhutan periodically. This proved to be a pleasant and stimulating responsibility. King Jigme Singye (abdicated 2006) of Bhutan, who had been on the throne since 1972, when he was seventeen years old, was a man of extraordinary vision. Over some twenty years he gradually introduced elements of democratic governance into Bhutan, culminating in 2008 in his abdication and the introduction of a constitutional monarchy with his son, Jigme Khesar Namgyel, crowned as the first constitutional monarch of Bhutan. In light of my earlier interests in constitutional engineering in Northern Rhodesia and the holding of

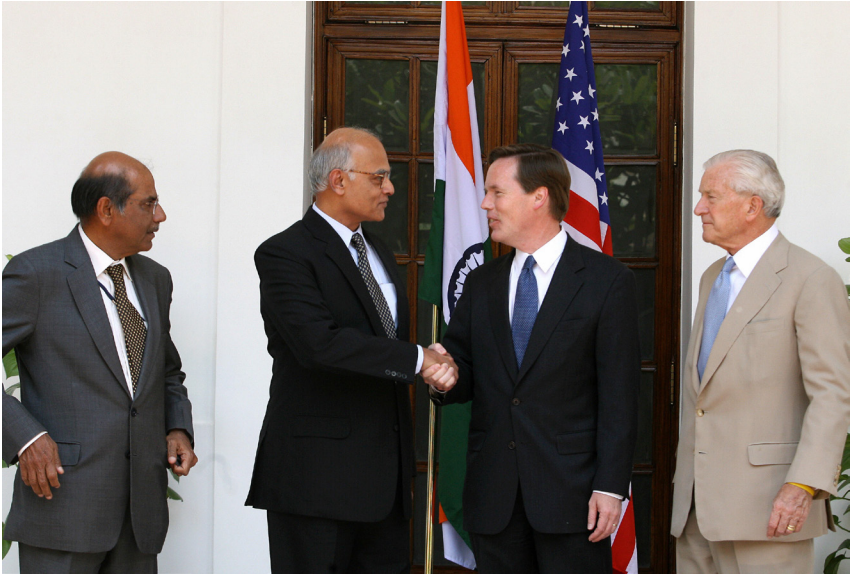
elections, I was fascinated and impressed by the wisdom and administration King Jigme Singye developed to accomplish this impressive change. Jeannie and I attended the memorable and colorful coronation in Bhutan of King Jigme Khesar Namgyel in December 2006.

\* \* \*

In early 2007 the United States began an intensive engagement with India on the negotiation of the US-India Section 123 Agreement which, when completed, would govern bilateral arrangements between the United States and India for civil nuclear cooperation. This would be a true test of the resolve of both sides to determine whether a workable 123 Agreement could actually be hammered out in a fashion acceptable to both sides, to the world at large, and ultimately to the US Congress. The US negotiation process in Washington was led by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Nick Burns. Responsibility was shared with National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley and his assistant John Rood, a man with knowledge and experience in the field of nuclear policy. In the State Department the chief expert among the negotiators was Director of the Office of Nuclear Energy, Safety and Security Richard Stratford, who had negotiated previous 123 Agreements for the United States. Although skeptical of success, Dick Stratford was a complete professional, a man of deep experience, loyal dedication to the agreed-on agenda of the US government, and realistic in his approach to a complex and politically sensitive process.

Most of our meetings took place in India with three key figures in the Indian government. First, Shyam Saran, former foreign secretary and now the prime minister's representative for the express purpose of this negotiation; National Security Advisor M. K. Narayanan, often referred to as the keeper of the equities of the Gandhi family; and finally, Foreign Secretary Shankar Menon, who was the former Indian ambassador to China and Pakistan.

Progress was slow, partly because the education process concerning the comprehensive reach of the 123 Agreement took time to be



Nicholas Burns, US under secretary of state (center right), shakes hands with Shiv Shankar Menon, Indian foreign secretary (center left) as India's top nuclear negotiator Shyam Saran (left) and Ambassador David Mulford look on during a meeting in New Delhi, June 1, 2007. The meeting was a continuation of talks between India and the United States intended to resolve delays in the nuclear agreement. *Raveendran/AFP via Getty Images*

digested by the Indians, but also because a key element on the Indian side, namely India's powerful and privileged nuclear science community, was not regularly present at our meetings, not in any case at its most senior level. In fact, as negotiations proceeded during the first six months of 2007, it seemed to me that India's nuclear science community had lost its initial enthusiasm for the deal. There was no doubt that rising leftist opposition was making itself felt in the nuclear community and in the cabinet coalition. In addition, a community that had enjoyed the particular favor and respect (not to mention funding and other privileges) of Indian governments over some thirty years began perhaps to recognize that it would be subject to new constraints and far greater demands for transparency than in the past.

By March 2007 we had reached a point where further progress seemed doubtful. A distinct paralysis had set in regarding the more difficult issues, especially concerning India's demand for ironclad fuel assurances, minimal control over international use and allocation of fuel and technology between the civil and strategic sides of the industry, and finally the degree of intrusion into India's nuclear affairs by outside players such as the IAEA, the Nuclear Suppliers Group, and the United States. The Indians also sought to give the widest and most flexible interpretation to the amended language of the Atomic Energy Act to permit them the greatest latitude possible in the provisions of the 123 Agreement. For weeks on end we waited in vain for the Indian side to put its bottom-line demands on the table. Instead, there seemed to be endless sparring when it seemed to us that India's leadership should force its nuclear scientific community and bureaucrats to face up to the fundamental political decisions that would have to be made if India was to see its grand project through to completion. Several highly touted meetings in Washington fared no better, and we began to wonder who in India was really in charge of the nuclear initiative.

Meanwhile, we also engaged in our first discussions about how the enterprise would be advanced to the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group once we had completed the 123 Agreement. These exchanges highlighted very deep differences on the degree of responsibility to be borne by each party in the next phase. The board of governors of the IAEA met several times a year, but not all country members of the Nuclear Suppliers Group were represented on the IAEA board. In addition, the 123 Agreement, when completed, was not itself subject to the formal approval of the IAEA board. Instead, the IAEA-India bilateral Nuclear Safeguards Agreement would require the formal approval of the board, and, so far as we could tell, the Indians had not yet seriously engaged the IAEA in this negotiation. It seemed that perhaps India was assuming it could get by in the IAEA with a relatively simple pro forma safeguards agreement pushed through the board by the United States. Our view, on the other hand, was that the IAEA Nuclear Safeguards Agreement was a bilateral matter between

the IAEA and India to be voted upon ultimately under the standard procedures of the board.

The second issue divided us even further: how India was to win the support of the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the transformation of its status from nuclear outcast to full civil nuclear participant in the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime. The Nuclear Suppliers Group met in plenary session at most only twice a year. The United States had made an explanatory presentation to the group, but we clearly looked to India to follow up with its own campaign to sell the plan for civil nuclear development as well as the credibility of its plans to comply with the principles and practices of nuclear nonproliferation. As the months passed, we urged India to make its case before one of the Nuclear Suppliers Group plenary meetings to begin to build the support that would be needed when the 123 Agreement and the IAEA-India safeguards agreement were placed before the group for formal consideration.

No doubt the process for achieving a full consensus supporting India in a group that functioned only by consensus as opposed to majority vote was extremely challenging. Our view was that it was vital for India to lay this groundwork at the few plenary sessions that would present themselves over the next eighteen months. India's view was that it was the responsibility of the United States to achieve the needed consensus on India's behalf. Only the United States could bring the necessary influence to bear on all the member nations to move them to a full consensus. India's efforts, they feared, would be divisive, and in any case, India lacked the power to force recalcitrant members to come to the table with positive attitudes. The result was that as plenary opportunities passed, we waited for India, and they waited for us while members of the group enjoyed the comfort of almost complete withdrawal.

The climax of the 123 negotiation came in July at a meeting in Washington. The outstanding points that remained unresolved were few in number. Bringing the Indian side to the table for final resolution of these issues had taken months of talks that failed to move toward resolution. One began to wonder whether it was the chairman of India's

nuclear power authority who held the power of final decision or the prime minister. The coalition itself was divided, with the leftist parties holding a position of inflexible hostility toward the entire enterprise. Finally, we succeeded in getting all the senior negotiators from both sides in the same room on the seventh floor of the State Department, with Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission of India Anil Kakodkar ensconced in a nearby hotel room, positioned for private consultations with the Indian team. I was present at the table with grave misgivings about the once-removed status of Anil Kakodkar, who apparently would have to sanction final concessions by India.

India sought to strengthen in its favor the provisions referring to the supply of nuclear fuel to India under all circumstances and conditions that might prevail in the future. The language governing this subject had been agreed on with President Bush at the time of the completion of India's nuclear separation agreement the previous year. The gist of India's concern was that if, in the future, the United States imposed sanctions or otherwise terminated nuclear cooperation with India, the United States also might attempt to block the provision of fuel for India even while India's agreement with the Nuclear Suppliers Group and the IAEA remained in place.

In order to soften India's fears, we had agreed to assist India in creating a nuclear fuel stockpiling facility which if rationally managed by India would overcome any US supply problem. For example, if India stockpiled fuel not from the United States and used US-origin fuel for current operations, the threat of a US disruption, which we believed in any case not to be a relevant threat in world uranium markets, would be overcome. The functioning of the world's heavily private uranium markets in our view removed the threat to India of the United States exercising control over the world market. But India, which apparently had weak faith in the dependability of markets and in its own ability to manage a stockpile operation, remained fearful of US influence and their vulnerability to political criticism in India. In the end, we refused to soften the original presidential language to give India the comfort it was seeking.



India's other major demand was that it should be granted the right by the United States to establish a facility for reprocessing nuclear fuel. While we were willing to consider the matter in principle in the future, India sought the granting of this right up front in the 123 Agreement. This proved to be a deeply contentious issue. The Indians refused to budge. In the end, President Bush agreed to make the concession in the form of agreement by the United States to immediately grant India the right to establish a nuclear fuel reprocessing facility, subject to some carefully crafted language which in effect required a further negotiation with the United States within a set time period and in accordance with certain agreed procedures and conditions.

By the last days of July the 123 Agreement text was completed. Formal parliamentary approval of the agreement was not required in India, but the government was anxious to have the issue fully aired in the form of a parliamentary debate during the monsoon session of parliament in August and September. Only then would the government move ahead to the next phase of completing its negotiation of India's bilateral nuclear safeguards agreement with the IAEA. We were now only eighteen months away from the end of the Bush administration.

The monsoon parliament erupted in chaos when the motion was made to introduce debate on the US-India 123 Agreement. Day after day, whenever an attempt was made to introduce debate, order could not be established to permit debate. India's media was vociferous and divided on the merits of the deal reached with the United States. India's BJP opposition, which had initially introduced the idea of civil nuclear cooperation prior to 2004, now refused to recognize that its own aspirations had been achieved and even exceeded. They refused to accept the written facts of the case as presented in the agreement and demagogued all the old shibboleths of a US conspiracy with the Indian government to rob India of its nuclear independence and to subjugate India's foreign policy to US control. Leftist parties exceeded even these extreme accusations and stated that if the government of India took any steps toward advancing the process to the IAEA or the Nuclear Suppliers Group, they would immediately withdraw their support of the UPA government and call



for a vote of confidence that surely was likely to bring the government down. Other groups made the case that even though a parliamentary vote was not required to “ratify” the 123 Agreement, the nuclear initiative was so unique in India’s history that a debate and vote of confidence to reflect the sense of parliament should be mandatory.

By early September we faced a complete standoff, and India’s political process regarding the agreement was frozen in place. As I tried to engage India’s senior officials, pointing out the timetable constraints we and they would face in completing the entire process, I was met with empty assurances of a rapid move forward to the IAEA. To the argument that agreement had already been reached between us on the 123 text and that India must advance to the next stage, there was only a nodding caution and reminders of the complexities of Indian domestic politics. September turned to October with no sign of movement and no real engagement with the United States on when any action would be taken.

Finally, on October 12, the opening day of the *Hindustan Times* annual world forum event, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh announced that maintaining the coalition government for its full term through May 2009 would take priority over completing India’s civil nuclear agreement with the United States. I was stunned by this remarkable statement and simply unable to comprehend the rationale for turning away from what the Indians themselves had characterized as the most important diplomatic initiative of the past sixty years. There was sharp anger in the State Department and the White House, together with the usual charges of incompetence, untrustworthiness, and plain double dealing by the Indian government, a staple of the past fifty years of behavior between the two great democracies.

This preemptive action was a heavy blow after two and a half years of dedicated effort on an initiative that I knew to be of vital importance to the Indian government. One could understand the UPA’s fear of a withdrawal of leftist party support from the coalition, and one could equally recognize the Congress Party leadership placing a high priority on successfully managing a coalition government for the full five years of

parliament. What I found less easy to justify was the fact that this government had negotiated and agreed on the text of the 123 Agreement after the US Congress had agreed to amend the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 for the first time since its original passage, and only then had they balked. I also thought direction from the Congress Party leadership to the nuclear science community to comply with what the leadership had set as India's future nuclear policy was more than overdue. We heard reports of complicit actions between the nuclear science leadership group and the leftist parties to delay the agreement, which to me seemed as incredible as it was unacceptable. Who was really in charge of India, I wondered, as the prime minister and the Indian cabinet had decided long before to move ahead with the 123 Agreement.

Yet I had lived and worked for many years among difficult people and in politically sensitive situations requiring supreme patience and iron discipline against the temptation to become outraged and to engage in satisfying but essentially unproductive public statements. Besides, I knew from experience that an outspoken stance could result in further backward movement. I firmly believed that the nuclear deal was a fundamental interest of India, that the leaders genuinely wanted to do the deal, and that given the complexities of Indian politics, the best strategy was to wait, say virtually nothing, and be prepared for any break. It was no different from my early football experience: if you were sitting on the bench, your first duty to yourself and your team was to be ready at any moment to enter the game and to score the first time you touch the ball. It had worked for me in the past, and I was sure there would at least be one chance at some point, and if the chance came it could not be missed.

Once the government acknowledged that its top priority was the preservation of the UPA coalition through the full term of its authority (May 2009), it had in reality made itself hostage to the leftist parties in the coalition and even to divisions within Congress and among its more loyal coalition partners. The weakened position of the government's leadership therefore extended well beyond the question of India's civil nuclear initiative with the United States. The next eight

months would gradually reveal the weakened ability of the Congress leadership in India's government to lead, and to fall to a level of impotence across the whole policy spectrum. Rising subsidies, giveaway programs to rural India, and the inability to cope with a sharp rise in inflation in food and energy prices had by May 2008 reduced the government of Prime Minister Singh to what I characterized at the time as feeble impotence. With the next general election only a year away, one would have given no chance for this government to be reelected. Its single claim to credibility was the fact that the Congress Party would have managed a coalition government for the full five-year term, but that accomplishment would come at the expense of nearly two years of paralysis, with no significant policy achievement and an economy in decline. In June 2008 the government was forced to cave in on its policy of preserving ceilings on energy prices and to concede that inflation would peak at approximately 14 percent over the coming months. There was a public outcry on both fronts, and the government fell into the habit of blaming these setbacks on a poor monsoon in 2007 and world energy price rises in 2008.

On the all-important questions of the 123 Agreement negotiation I adopted a policy of quiet patience, first to understand the full magnitude of the government's dilemma and second not to insert the United States directly into India's troubled political scene. From our standpoint it looked as if the prime minister's pronouncement of October 2007 would result in a fatal blow to the timetable to see the deal through to completion during the Bush administration. The common wisdom was that there were too many complex steps still to be achieved before final approval could be gained from the US Congress, which would have its own timetable constraints. Once the administration ended, the view in Washington was that even though Congress had amended the 1954 Atomic Energy Act, the nuclear initiative would have to begin all over again in a new Congress and administration where its prospects looked distinctly less bright. We would be back to square one.

At first the idea persisted in India that somehow the impending timetable issues could be overcome, apparently by the magical powers of the

United States in the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, as well as by the US administration's powers to manipulate the Congress. Once again, India's facile assumptions that global realities could be overcome at some final moment by the importance of the United States and India conducting some kind of lightning strike persuaded the Indian bureaucracy not to worry. I was told that the government wanted the agreement to succeed and would find a way to work around its political limitations. The reality was, however, that on the US side the shrinking timetable and the complexities of congressional action would overwhelm us. Meanwhile, the main point in India was not to politicize the situation, a significant challenge in a country of constant political turmoil with a hyperactive media.

For a period of nine months I made no aggressive remarks in public, rose to none of the bait offered by the media or India's active think tank community. Instead, I expressed our understanding and respect for India's political process and our willingness to let the political process work itself through. On two occasions I added simply that we were aware of and concerned about the passage of time and its effect on the deal timetable, with no further elaboration on the dozens of questions which inevitably followed.

Privately, with Indian officials and with senior ministers, including the prime minister, I was more specific about the rising importance of our timetable constraints. Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee, an extremely able and politically astute leader on many fronts in the Indian government, was charged with chairing a committee in the Indian government on the question of moving civil nuclear talks forward in a fashion that could be supported by the coalition, and especially by the leftist parties. This, of course, was next to impossible, because the leftist parties had not been able to prevent the negotiation of either the separation agreement or the US-India 123 Agreement, and as a result, their only chance of blocking progress was to oppose any movement by the government to begin negotiations with the IAEA on India's nuclear safeguards agreement. This, the left argued, represented the first and critical step in making the 123 Agreement operational. Were

the government to take such a step, the leftist parties would withdraw their support from the government and call for a confidence motion in parliament, which would surely bring the government down. Thus, Foreign Minister Mukherjee was conducting a negotiation formed on the basis of how many subtle steps could be debated on the head of a very sharp pin without imperiling the survival of the government. As time passed and the government became more enfeebled on a number of different fronts, one could sense that the leftist parties had less to lose by withdrawing support from the coalition and possibly something to be gained by disassociating themselves from a government that was both less effective and more unpopular.

As the weeks following October 12 turned into months of waiting and watching for the smallest signs of progress, I developed a vigil mentality, waiting on the sidelines for the chance to enter the game, take the ball, and score. I had to be ready, to visualize every possibility, however dull the waiting might be, and to avoid at all costs any sense of hopelessness. Every day I was turning over our problem in my mind. Meanwhile, Nick Burns left the State Department in May 2008, and I sensed that others in Washington had given up and accepted what seemed to be inevitable failure.

\* \* \*

June 2008 was the low point in the popularity of Prime Minister Singh's government. A dramatic rise in inflation, especially in food prices impacting India's multitudes and in the price of petrol at the pump, fueled the government's widespread unpopularity. Looming food shortages and price inflation even persuaded India to prohibit exports of essential foodstuffs, such as rice, to poor countries in Africa and elsewhere. India, the traditional leader of the Third World who had so often lectured the West about the morals of assistance, turned inward to brace itself against the possibility of another failed monsoon.

We were approaching the annual economic summit of the heads of state and governments set for early July in Tokyo. Prime Minister

Singh was to meet bilaterally with President Bush. The meeting looked like the very last chance in an already failing nuclear initiative. In the second half of June I asked to see Prime Minister Singh to make it clear to him that whatever he might be hearing from the bureaucracy we were at the last possible moment for any hope of completing the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement.

In the constant process of turning over the problem of our impasse on the civil nuclear agreement, I had developed a line of argument for action by India that I thought might be appealing to Indian thought processes. If India were to advance now to the IAEA and then to the Nuclear Suppliers Group and finally lodge these accomplishments before the US Congress in its last session, India might well achieve two highly significant results. By gaining the approvals of the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group, both of which would be supported by the United States, the burden for further action would shift directly onto Congress and the administration. Even if the congressional timetable and the rules laid down for processing final approval made the task impossible to complete, India would be in a position to argue that it had done its part to fulfill its commitments to the Bush administration.

The second element of this approach was to consider what India's position might be if the exception granted to India by US law to access civil nuclear technology from outside India were to be formally recognized and accepted by both the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. These actions would have been proposed and supported by the United States. The US Atomic Energy Act of 1954 was already amended with commanding bipartisan majorities in Congress. The change in US law, of course, would not have been activated by final congressional approval of the actions taken by the IAEA and the Nuclear Suppliers Group. One had to wonder, however, whether actions taken by recognized international bodies of sovereign nations, including the United States, might not remain valid for those countries who decided to honor these decisions in their dealings with India. If India, having accomplished these approvals, moved ahead and

submitted its completed actions to Congress by early September 2008, and Congress failed to act before January 20, 2009, the status of India's position in the world of civil nuclear commerce after that date might be open to widely different interpretations. Even if such an outcome could be forestalled, would the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement really be dead in the eyes of a new administration in 2009, especially with all other conditions with other nations already met? I did not believe a new administration would be able under these circumstances to hold the position that the nuclear deal had died on January 20, 2009. There had been ample time for consideration of the agreement (nearly four years) in the United States, a change in law supported by overwhelming bipartisan majorities in Congress, and approvals in the IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers Group, supported in each case by the United States as to their compliance with the intent of Congress and the Bush administration. Finally, if India did choose to go ahead with other countries who had approved the agreements, the US nuclear industry would be left out in the cold while the French, Germans, and Russians secured the crucial opening round of contracts.

My point to the prime minister when we met and discussed these issues in late June was that moving ahead immediately to obtain IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers Group approvals and afterward to place the matter before the US Congress in September held far more hope for India than simply remaining inactive. If these actions brought about a confidence vote in parliament by the leftist parties and the government won, India would no longer be held hostage to the threat of the leftist parties, and it would be in a position to put pressure on Congress and the US administration. By proceeding in this fashion, India would have honored its commitment to the United States to complete all steps and submit the result to Congress for approval. The pressure on Congress and the administration would be very significant in the closing months of an administration hoping to burnish its legacy. Congress had its rules, but the congressional leadership also knew how to alter its rules from time to time. India had everything to gain by going forward, provided that the government could survive calling the bluff of their Communist

coalition members. If the final deal could be placed before Congress with all other approvals accomplished by the opening of the session after Labor Day in early September, it would not be India's fault if the agreement were not finally ratified before January 2009.

The prime minister listened intently. I had purposely arranged to meet with him alone so I could speak freely in hopes of planting a seed I might not want to openly acknowledge. He expressed his extreme regret over having to go to Tokyo and meet with his friend, President Bush, with nothing to offer for the remarkable efforts of the United States over the past three years. I knew, however, that he had taken in the logic of my proposal without acknowledging its somewhat Machiavellian twist so far as the United States might be concerned.

Some two weeks later, while seated in my office, a news flash came over the wires that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on his flight to the Tokyo summit had announced to traveling reporters that India would commence immediately to move the nuclear deal forward to the IAEA in the form of its application for the board to vote its approval of the IAEA-India Nuclear Safeguards Agreement. This, everyone agreed, was the first step to operationalizing the civil nuclear agreement. I will remember this moment as one of the most courageous decisions in my experience by a prime minister for the future of his country. I knew then that we would make the final run for ratification by this administration, and my heart could not have risen with more excitement in my breast.

Back on earth, the leftist parties immediately signaled their withdrawal of support for the coalition government, provoking the prospect of an immediate parliamentary vote of confidence that would test the ability of the coalition and the civil nuclear agreement to survive. The confidence vote was set for the third week of July, and the first media judgments were that the government could not survive.

For the next two weeks the chief activity of the media was to count and recount potential votes on a daily basis. Sometimes the government lost by twelve to fifteen votes. Other times it lost by fewer than five votes. Then, in the waning days there were rumors of the government



gaining the support of one of their severest critics, Amarh Singh, and his handful of twenty-three votes in the lower house. Rumors were that his party would not join the coalition government, but on this important test it would support the policy of the government. In the end, Prime Minister Singh won the confidence vote by a comfortable margin, but not before some highly dramatic theater in parliament during the debate preceding the vote. One member marched into the chamber with a large suitcase in hand, which he opened on the speaker's rostrum to spill millions of rupees across the table and onto the floor. This, he said, was the cash he had been offered to change his vote to support the government. He raised his arms shouting that he would have none of it. The government brushed the theater aside and immediately began its efforts to advance to the IAEA and Nuclear Suppliers Group. Once again we were engaged with India in a common purpose whose urgency with the summer break looming in Europe could hardly be overestimated.

Bureaucrats in Europe and those based in Europe from other countries invariably shut up shop in the month of August. We needed an IAEA board meeting vote, and we estimated at least two plenary sessions of the forty-five-member Nuclear Suppliers Group—all before early September. It was common practice not to hold an IAEA board meeting in August, and plenary meetings of the Nuclear Suppliers Group normally took place approximately nine months apart. We also faced the problem that the suppliers group would refuse to meet until the IAEA had completed its work.

So, Vienna became the target for meetings in the languid days of summer. One could imagine delegates being dragged back from holidays for business that many were not in any case keen to process. The US Congress would reconvene on September 8, so we had five weeks for a process we had imagined would require many months. We also had a US Congress whose last session running up to the presidential election in early November was rumored to be shrinking so members could be home campaigning by early October.

Our first break came in early August when the IAEA agreed to hold a board vote on India's nuclear safeguards agreement. Work had

already been done on safeguards by India, and since the draft agreement followed the many other precedents the IAEA had established with other countries, the agreement was acted on relatively quickly. This brought the focus of attention onto the Nuclear Suppliers Group, which had a diverse membership of both large and small countries.

Consensus was reached that there should be a meeting set in Vienna for August 20–23, where the first full discussion would take place with a view to reconvening in early September after governments had the opportunity of home office consultations, which for most countries meant that top political leaders would have to make the final decision to support or oppose India.

I attended the Vienna meeting, which was a much larger, more formal affair than I had imagined. Its plenary gathering numbered more than two hundred, with delegates spread at desks across a wide but rather shallow hall. The chairman presided at a small desk that was not raised onto a rostrum and did not provide space for lieutenants flanking him on either side. Statements were brief; there were a large number of contributions, and the debate that followed was neither especially active nor substantive in nature.

I suspected it was largely a behind-the-scenes affair, with most participants there to gather information and impressions for their subsequent deliberations back home. One event that greatly surprised and troubled me was a briefing we had scheduled for the Indian team led by Shyam Saran and Shankar Menon. The briefing was held in the luxurious plenary hall of the IAEA. The Indian team led off with summary remarks before opening the floor to questions and discussion. To my surprise not a single delegate raised a question. I concluded that either the periodic briefings over the past two years had effectively answered all outstanding questions or that minds were already made up and delegates did not wish to show their hands. I began to wonder exactly how a consensus by the suppliers group, which had never had a seriously divisive issue to decide, would be formed, and, more to the point, expressed. There was to be no formal vote. What would happen if a country simply abstained from reaching its view on the India

issue? Would a consensus be based only on those present at a future meeting, or must it include every country expressing its decision in some forum at a particular moment in time?

What was clear from the Vienna meeting was that several smaller countries with socialist governments and strong environmental communities were not supportive of the agreements. I also noticed that delegates were almost exclusively drawn from the nuclear nonproliferation or defense offices of the various foreign ministries. These officials, like their counterparts in Washington, were highly specialized and generally unenthusiastic about any change in the global nuclear nonproliferation architecture. The broader issues we had advanced with members of Congress in the United States when preparing for the vote to change the Atomic Energy Act were simply not discussed by our team or by delegates in general.

An exception was at a dinner hosted by the US ambassador to the IAEA in Vienna, where a small group of delegates engaged in the kind of broad-based discussion we had been hearing in Washington for nearly two years. Afterward, the Swiss delegate, whose country reportedly was against authorizing the deal, conceded to me that he had learned more in one evening than in the past forty years. He was from the Swiss Foreign Office's section dealing with nuclear nonproliferation, which was where I imagined he had been for most of the past forty years.

When I returned to Delhi from Vienna it was clear that six countries were likely to hold out against India: Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Ireland, and New Zealand. China was also a holdout, although for different reasons, and they had not at this point formally declared their position. Before leaving Vienna I met with Austria's foreign secretary, who, like others, had not been exposed to the broader range of arguments for bringing India into the global system. Clearly, what was missing in many of these countries was a broader political awareness of the importance of finding a basis for India to participate in the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime. Austria, for example, prided itself on having no nuclear reactors in its country, but as everyone knew, Austria imported large amounts of electricity generated

from nuclear reactors in neighboring countries. There was no understanding of India's situation, its energy needs for its growing economy, and the environmental damage that would flow from India, as with China, from supporting its high growth in the decades ahead almost entirely from power based on exploiting coal. India would surely continue to thrive and in doing so could well become the world's largest polluter, unless it succeeded in the coming years to build and operate a world-class civil nuclear industry large enough to support its future growth. This point was generally accepted in the Delhi diplomatic community but not by several of the smaller countries that would need to support India in the Nuclear Suppliers Group consensus.

Back in New Delhi, I saw the urgency of engaging politically with these possible "holdout" countries. Before going to Vienna I had invited the ambassadors of the Nuclear Suppliers Group countries to my residence for a briefing. This had been appreciated on the ground in New Delhi but had accomplished little more than to provide an information flow back to foreign offices, which in many cases were already in summer break mode.

I felt I had to engage the ambassadors of the countries that were likely holdouts in a way that would provoke them into raising the India issue to the highest political levels in their countries before the second and decisive meeting of the suppliers group. I decided to host a luncheon at my residence and invite ambassadors from only the six holdout countries. Internally, I called the event "The Recalcitrants' Lunch." I asked my staff to prepare a paper with six sections, one devoted to the development of each country's relationship with India over the previous five years. I knew that India was among the highest diplomatic and commercial priorities for each country during the course of my tenure. The paper focused on their accomplishments, their improving trade balances with India, and their foreign direct investment progress. Many countries had sponsored multiple visits to India of various trade, education, development, and diplomatic delegations.

When the various ambassadors arrived at Roosevelt House and saw the seven place settings at the large round table set in the main

reception room looking out into Roosevelt House's spacious, green garden, they knew this was to be a lunch for the select few. At the table I handed out the papers and asked them to read the three pages of country-specific information. Then I said that I had invited them to this gathering because the White House and the secretary of state were confused as to why their countries were prepared to sacrifice their impressive accomplishments with India over the past five years. To this comment there was a profound silence.

I continued that the United States was only confused about what appeared to be their common view not to join in the consensus that would permit India to return to the world of civil nuclear commerce and to become a positive participant in the global nuclear nonproliferation regime. The United States had important and intensive relations with each of their countries, which would not be disturbed by whatever decision they finally would make. India's reaction, however, to a decision to torpedo the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, whether as a group or individually, would, I noted, be an entirely different story. I let them know that the United States did not understand why they would so lightly sacrifice five years of progress with India, because I had no doubt that India would impose a harsh and painful price on any country that sabotaged what for India was seen as their most important diplomatic breakthrough for the past fifty years.

The lunch went smoothly but quite quickly. As the ambassadors hastened out into the rising summer heat, I knew the lines to capitals would be singing that afternoon. I was also confident that the afternoon's messages would convey a sense of panic and be directed to the highest levels in their governments—well above their respective bureaucracies. No one left the working paper behind, and I sat with a cup of coffee, which all the "recalcitrants" had politely declined, and thought of the entertaining instructions printed on English fireworks back when I was at Oxford: "Light fuse and retire."

I did not attend the second plenary of the Nuclear Suppliers Group in early September. This meeting would simply record whether a perfect consensus could be achieved to support the proposed change in

India's position in the world of civil nuclear commerce. Debate and lobbying in Vienna were over. We would soon know whether a small group of holdout countries, or even a single nation in the forty-five-member group, would destroy the consensus for change. In the days leading up to the plenary meeting the "recalcitrant" group of small countries began to weaken. Opposing India, the United States, and the other large nuclear powers who supported the changed status for India would clearly carry a high price. At the meeting they all supported the consensus, together with China, which joined at the last minute after a call the previous night from President Bush to the prime minister of China.

There could be no doubt about the magnitude of this victory, and all of us involved in the effort shared an enormous sense of pride and achievement. In particular, we were very fortunate to have Geoff Pyatt, my former much-valued deputy chief of mission in India, serving as the deputy to our ambassador in Vienna. Geoff was knowledgeable, committed to the cause, and a skilled diplomat, who is now the US ambassador to Ukraine.<sup>1</sup> But our victory could only be short-lived, because we still faced what appeared to be the impossible task of working the final ratification through the US Congress. When Congress reconvened on September 8 after its summer recess, it was expected to remain in session only through mid-October before adjourning prior to the presidential election in early November. The original legislation passed in 2006 visualized a process for this final phase that would set aside at least thirty congressional business days, which in the normal course of events could well cover up to sixty calendar days. Even assuming a "lame duck" session of Congress after the election, there simply would not be enough days before the administration ended on January 20, 2009. Only a decision by the congressional leadership to change the rules could alter this prospect.

Pressure for this initiative came immediately from the administration. Recall, however, the political atmosphere that dominated

---

1. As of 2024, Pyatt is assistant secretary of state of energy resources.

Washington at that time. We were less than two months away from a strongly contested general election that stimulated highly partisan interests. In addition, the global financial crisis reached its peak in September 2008, when political leaders and finance officials found themselves staring into the abyss of a complete breakdown of the world's financial system. The meltdown of global financial markets was sowing panic on Wall Street, in London, and in Japan, and Congress was engaged in a frantic effort to enact economic stabilization measures.

On September 25 the president's economic stabilization legislation was defeated in Congress, and that evening he hosted Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India for a small private dinner in the family dining room of the White House. The prime minister was accompanied by Foreign Secretary Menon, National Security Advisor Narayanan, and the ambassador of India to the United States, Ronen Sen. Our side included National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, and me. The dinner was memorable from the moment President Bush entered the room. Despite having had one of the worst days of his presidency, with collapsing markets and the defeat of his stabilization package in Congress, he entered with a calm and friendly bearing, conveying none of the frustration of his day. In fact, as we sat down to dinner, he tipped back his chair and observed that after such a day there was no one in the world that he would rather be having dinner with that evening than Prime Minister Singh. The president referred to the example of calmness and peace always conveyed by the prime minister and expressed his gratitude for the prime minister being at the White House on this particular evening.

We exchanged views on a wide variety of subjects that evening, including prospects for congressional action on the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement. The president was confident that the measure would be passed by the Congress before the general election recess. This was the most heartening observation of the evening, and in less than two weeks it proved to be correct. The congressional leadership came together to agree to process the final very simple piece of legislation that would bless and activate the agreement. Once again, large

bipartisan majorities were registered in both houses of Congress, just one month before a divisive US general election. President Bush's legacy for India was secured. I believed then and still believe that this accomplishment with India by President Bush will be seen for decades to come as the cornerstone of modern US-India relations, as well as vital to India's rise to world power status.

For me the vote was the culmination of nearly four years of effort on every aspect of the civil nuclear initiative, coupled with periods of patience and restraint as the process unfolded in our respective capitals and as all the countries in the global nuclear nonproliferation regime came together to express their support.

The signing by the president at the White House on October 8 of the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act was the event that crystallized the entire enterprise. The East Room was packed, with every seat and space for standing occupied. Across the back of the room were more TV cameras and still photographers than I had ever seen in one place, including most summit meetings around the world. Dozens of the cameras were directly linked to India, where I knew that in the heat of the late monsoon season the nation waited.

Jeannie and I entered the White House early to attend a private reception with the president and leaders of Congress. We noticed when entering through the East Wing portico that the Secret Service guards were permitting attendees to bring cameras and cell phones into the White House, despite signs clearly asking visitors to leave all such items at the gate. Perhaps the Secret Service had recognized that the large crowd of Indians and Indian Americans who had been critical to the lobbying success in Congress would resist leaving their cameras behind on this happy and historic occasion.

Inside we met the president and members of Congress to enjoy the moment and sense of accomplishment shared by all. Then we moved into the East Room, resplendent in brilliant lights and set up with a raised stage and a small table decorated with American and Indian flags, with the legislation laid out for signing. Vice President Cheney





President George W. Bush signs H.R. 7081, The United States-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act, October 8, 2008, in the East Room at the White House. Behind President Bush (left to right) are Rep. Joseph Crowley, Rep. Eliot Engel, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Sen. Chris Dodd, Sen. John Warner, Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman, India's ambassador to the United States Ronen Sen, and Vice President Dick Cheney. *Official White House photo by Eric Draper, courtesy of George W. Bush Presidential Library*

was present, and a group of congressional leaders stood behind the president.

President Bush spoke from the rostrum before moving to the small table decorated with the Indian and American flags to sign the US-India Nuclear Cooperation Approval and Nonproliferation Enhancement Act.

Jeannie and I were seated in the first row just before the signing desk. When the president spoke, we both saw him wink at us as he completed the opening passage. Then he moved to the table and in a few moments signed the ribboned legislative packages. Thousands



Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice with Pranab Mukherjee, Indian minister of external affairs, after signing the bilateral instruments of the 123 Agreement, October 10, 2008. *Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP*

of flash bulbs exploded with shutters making what seemed to be a wall of simultaneous clicks. Everyone stood with a great cheer, with the Indians immediately leaving their seats and surging forward. The president stepped off the stage and came straight to us to shake hands, to congratulate me and thank me for my efforts. He embraced Jeannie and kissed her on the cheek. Such was the consideration consistently shown by this president for the people who worked for him.

Jeannie and I felt at that moment and in the confusion that followed that the historic and boisterous occasion had been perfectly captured

in time. We felt a swelling of pride and sense of true accomplishment. We knew that our decision in 2005 to stay the course in India, despite Jeannie's suffering and our long separation, was truly an act of love and commitment that would carry forward for the rest of our lives.

\* \* \*

On the evening of October 25, 2005, I was invited to visit the campus of the Pathways School, a relatively new boarding school about an hour's drive outside New Delhi. The school was founded by the Jain family in New Delhi and in less than ten years had established itself as a serious baccalaureate-program educational institution. The occasion was a special evening for parents and guests in which the students put on a light show depicting the drama *Ramayana*, set around a small lake and stone works in the center of the campus. I was driven out on one of Delhi's first cool evenings after the long, hot summer, and the last ten miles down a narrow country lane at twilight under the rising of a full moon was lovely, cool, and picturesque in the fading light.

I spoke before the light show to the body of assembled parents, students, teachers, and visitors. When I finished, my security officer asked me to step away for a moment. He told me there had been a major terrorist bomb attack on Sarojini Market in New Delhi, with a large number of casualties. Within a few minutes I was on my way back into Delhi in a very different mood than on the outbound trip. Sarojini Market was not far from the diplomatic enclave; it was frequented by large crowds in the evenings, including many diplomatic personnel who were attracted by its convenience and huge selection of goods. I could not imagine the scenes of horror and hoped there were no American citizens among the dead and injured. Traffic going back to the city was heavy and I could understand why. Since the attack on India's parliament in early 2002 there had been virtually no significant terrorism attacks in India, apart from the almost daily incidents that swirled around Srinagar in Kashmir and periodic local violence in India's northeast. Sarojini was clearly an attack of a wholly different type.

No Americans were killed or injured in Sarojini Market that night, but the death toll numbered well over sixty and the destruction to shops and the market was widespread. In the next few weeks, intelligence sources, both Indian and American, identified Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), a well-established terrorist organization that operates largely out of Pakistan, as the perpetrators of this outrage. The rationale behind the attack was that Lashkar-e-Taiba wanted to increase its visibility and the national impact of its terrorist activities in India. The violence it promoted in Kashmir was now so commonplace that the organization was gaining only minimal publicity benefits from them. A few hand grenades and some daily murders confined to Kashmir simply were not spectacular enough and had little impact on the nation of India. Their new strategy was to strike into the heartland of India with spectacularly destructive attacks, claiming dozens of human lives and sowing division, distrust, and communal tensions in India's dense population. These attacks were to be the weapon of choice for Pakistan's future terrorist operations in India.

India, it appeared, would now face the chilling prospect of a much-expanded terrorist campaign. Sarojini Market would prove to be a watershed event for India's internal security and a significant challenge for US-India relations. The information pieced together by intelligence sources confirmed to the Indians that the attack was a new departure for Pakistan's terrorist campaign across India, which reached its peak three years later in the brutal terrorist attacks on hotels in Mumbai.

In the months that followed Sarojini Market, there were attacks in the markets of other Indian cities. These were virtually identical to the attack on Sarojini Market: crude pipe bombs, fire, panic, disorder, and bloody casualties. As soon as the attacks were over and police rushed in to hunt for suspects, crime scenes were cleaned, destroying any prospect for serious forensic work. Sketches of suspects were distributed, but there were few arrests and subsequently no significant prosecutions. The Indian intelligence community was sure that the terrorists were Pakistanis with no real local support from Indians, except perhaps for information or minor assistance paid for in cash by the perpetrators.

For the Indian intelligence community, the new strategy proved a depressing and frightening challenge.

That the LeT could marshal a far more destructive campaign was graphically demonstrated in the coordinated bomb attacks that took place in Mumbai against the city's commuter trains on July 11, 2006. Over two hundred people were killed at the height of the evening rush hour as they made their way home. For months afterward the *Daily News and Analysis* in Mumbai published a personal sketch each day of one individual victim, his or her life story as a working person, a family member, wife, husband, son, or daughter, and how by sheer chance that person came to be where they met their death in a train ripped open by blasts in the midst of heavy monsoon rains. These accounts were graphic and conveyed the pain, injustice, and pure chance of death by the hand of cross-border terrorism.

These developments also raised serious problems for me as US ambassador in India. In the years following 9/11 in the United States, when initially there was a notable sense of solidarity between the United States and India, questions arose in India concerning the apparent double standard of the US government toward terrorism in India. The attack on India's parliament in early 2002, which had clearly been carried out by Pakistanis, was not followed by any punitive US action against Pakistan. Instead, the United States appeared to be largely insensitive to Pakistani-led attacks across India following the Sarojini Market outrage in 2005. The United States continued to regard Pakistan as a critically important ally, vital to US interests in Afghanistan. US aid continued to flow to Pakistan without significant conditions. Providing new or modernized F-16s to Pakistan, for example, continued to be advanced as a policy objective of the US administration, whereas in India the attitude was that F-16s are not used for crowd control in cases of domestic unrest; they can carry nuclear weapons, which in India were clearly seen as for deployment against India. Nevertheless, the State Department continued issuing statements expressing our outrage and unconvincingly citing our shared interests in fighting terrorism. In fact, the State Department, the Department of Defense, and



the intelligence agencies of the United States all continued to assume that India should fully cooperate with the United States in the field of counterterrorism, with no commensurate action by the United States against Pakistan.

As ambassador to India, I found this attitude toward Pakistan's involvement in terrorism damaging for our otherwise strengthening relationship. Despite initiatives proposed from time to time in counterterrorism intelligence activities by the United States, the Indians restricted their cooperation with us to the exchange of intelligence information, drawing the line at any operational cooperation. Their attitude, in my view, caused a quite unjustified disappointment in the US intelligence community, followed by the typically superficial response that Indian attitudes just confirmed how difficult and unreasonable they could be to work with. Meanwhile, within the US government I found as ambassador a surprising and irritating lack of cooperation from our own intelligence community. Obtaining information on Pakistani sponsorship or encouragement of terrorism in India was simply not forthcoming from Washington, in spite of numerous requests for a more-considered appraisal of the role being played by the government of Pakistan. Instead, I received the worn and utterly useless response that US intelligence could not produce the "smoking gun" linkage required to convict the Pakistani government of actively planning and promoting terrorism in India.

By treating this life and death issue in India as if we had to meet the standard for guilt in a court of law before we could lift a constructive finger against the outrageous violence flowing into India from Pakistan, the United States struck a severe blow to its credibility in India. The slightest exercise of common sense would have justified some sort of punitive action against Pakistan. To broadcast our sympathy after each terrorist event and then to fail to follow up with any credible response on the ground in Pakistan was shameful for the United States and fully justified, in my view, the cynicism and suspicion our people found in both the government and society of India.

As my time in India began drawing to a close in 2008, and we had successfully revived the US-India civil nuclear effort, there was every reason to renew our efforts to address counterterrorism. This was the one area of US-India strategic cooperation that had remained at a standstill for four years. Several considerations came into play in trying to raise counterterrorism cooperation to a higher priority for both sides. Leadership in the US intelligence community was improved by the appointment of better people. Congress began to show tentative signs of wanting stronger conditionality on US aid to Pakistan. A new and highly classified technology that could be of key importance to India in its struggle to preempt terrorist activity on the ground in India was introduced for consideration between us. Finally, the continued pattern of more frequent attacks around India, coupled with the now quite impressive seven-year track record of the United States in preventing another 9/11 at home strongly suggested that India could benefit from a better understanding of US domestic actions to improve internal security since 9/11.

High-level meetings began to take place. I approached members of the Indian government to encourage them to arrange to visit US counterterrorism facilities in America to see for themselves how we had overcome the inherent conflicts in our federal, state, and municipal law enforcement structures to improve our ability to identify possible terrorist initiatives and in particular to disrupt attacks before they could take place. India's complex federal, state, and municipal structure of semiautonomous authorities raised many of the same questions we had faced when it was becoming increasingly obvious that India was losing the battle for ensuring internal security against terrorist attacks, whether from Pakistan or from the Naxalites within India. By October 2008 I felt sure I was getting their attention.

Then came Mumbai. On the evening of November 26, 2008, ten highly trained and heavily armed terrorists attacked Mumbai in what became India's 9/11. They came ashore in small rubber boats laden with explosives, heavy weapons, and ammunition. They set off for different targets: the railway station, a Jewish religious center, and three

of Mumbai's most fashionable hotels. Everywhere they appeared over the next few hours they killed indiscriminately: innocent people in the streets and the main train station, police officers, a rabbi and his wife at Nariman House, and hotel guests and Mumbai families enjoying the restaurants and ambience of Mumbai's leading hotels. As the terrorists entered the Taj Palace and the Oberoi Hotel they shot the door staff and the check-in people behind the front desks, then proceeded to the busy restaurants, killing people at their tables. At the Taj they quickly proceeded to the manager's apartment and murdered his wife and small children. Fires were started in the hotels as the terrorists went room to room, killing and seizing hostages.

The initial shock of the attack was quickly replaced by the realization that Mumbai and especially the hotels were under siege for as long as the terrorists could hold out. In the end this proved to be seventy-six hours, during which nine of the ten terrorists were killed and one captured wounded but alive. During this attack, after the initial killings in the restaurant and lobby areas, the terrorists stalked terrified guests in the rooms and as they tried to escape from the hotels. Hostages were checked for nationality, and foreigners were not released. A group of hostages were assembled at the Oberoi, marched to an upper floor, and brutally slaughtered.

Outside the hotels, vast crowds assembled to watch the flames coming out of the windows and on the roof of the historic Taj Palace Hotel. The police remained outside the hotels, seemingly immobilized, with any movement toward the hotels met with grenades tossed out by the terrorists, who seemed to know where the police were getting close to the buildings. Indian national television quickly staked out the hotels and reported nonstop on the unfolding horror.

Shortly after the attack began, I was contacted in Phoenix, Arizona, where Jeannie and I had gone for a family Thanksgiving. It was Wednesday evening in Phoenix and Thanksgiving morning in New Delhi. We left immediately for India. Arriving in New Delhi Friday evening, the attack was still going on, with movement by the authorities to enter the hotels with commandos only just begun. The following day



Secretary of State  
Condoleezza Rice arriving  
December 3, 2008, to dis-  
cuss rising tensions between  
India and Pakistan follow-  
ing the late November  
attacks in Mumbai by  
Pakistan-based terrorists.  
Pictured with Rice (left)  
are Ambassador Mulford  
and Jeannie Mulford.  
*Raveendran/AFP via  
Getty Images*



the terrorists were gradually overcome so that by late Saturday the attack was over and the authorities were left fighting the fires and searching hotels for bodies and survivors. Meanwhile, details of the street attacks, the railway station massacre, and the utterly depraved attack on Nariman House, the Jewish center, had emerged. Public outrage against the Indian authorities for what appeared to be a delayed and inadequate response swept the nation. Why couldn't the government of India protect its people against predictable terrorist outrages? The public seemed more intensely critical of their own authorities than against Pakistan, the suspected perpetrator of the attack. The view among Indians was that they expected this kind of outrageous behavior from Pakistan; it was India's inability to protect its own citizens that drew the ire of the Indians. Incompetence and inaction from top to bottom was the public's bitter judgment, which later, despite the personal bravery of many in the Mumbai police, proved to be for the most part true.

The most immediate political casualty was Home Minister Shivraj Patil, who resigned and was succeeded by P. Chidambaram, India's finance minister. Chidambaram, a lawyer by training and a leader from South India within the UPA coalition, had the reputation of being extremely able, articulate, and decisive. These qualities were quickly deployed at Home Affairs and in a fashion which immediately reorganized India's most urgent challenges following the attack. These were to identify and punish the perpetrators; to address India's obvious need for a coherent national security regime that could anticipate and disrupt future terrorist attacks; and to provide an immediately credible effort to identify Pakistan as the perpetrator of the attack.

We made the unusual offer to provide forensic assistance at the crime scene, and to our great surprise this was immediately accepted by the home minister. Indeed, a twelve-member FBI team was en route almost at once for India. Their agreed-on mission was to offer on-the-ground assistance to the Mumbai police. They were permitted to enter India at Mumbai instead of first going to New Delhi, and their sophisticated high-tech equipment was cleared for entry into India that same day at Mumbai airport. These were all remarkable developments by any historic standard that spoke of India's new attitude of urgency and the decisive nature of Mr. Chidambaram.

Within a few days it was clear that we had made a major breakthrough in counterterrorism cooperation with India. Much credit for this was to the FBI team members themselves, who were able to establish close and friendly working relations with the Mumbai police.

Eleven countries lost citizens in the Mumbai attack. India established the forensic effort as a serious process aimed at producing as quickly as possible a dossier of evidence that would indict Pakistan beyond question as the planner and perpetrator of the most professional and brutal terrorist attack ever on India. Progress was immediate and dramatic. The suspicion that the attack had been managed over some seventy-two hours by "handlers" in Pakistan was confirmed when the FBI was able to retrieve verbatim mobile telephone conversations between handlers in Pakistan and the ten terrorists on the ground in

Mumbai. These exchanges, which were transformed into transcripts, were recovered from the damaged and in some cases melted mobile phones found on the bodies of the terrorists. They confirmed that handlers in Pakistan were following events in Mumbai on 24/7 news channels on Indian television, instructing the terrorists in the hotels on where the Indian police were deployed, whom to kill, and whom to free, among the many hostages taken in the hotels. In one case, the terrorists were instructed to seek out foreigners, take them to an upper floor of the hotel, and hold out their phones so they could hear the hostages being killed.

The reconstructed record of the attack made the most horrible reading. It confirmed that at the hotels the doormen and baggage handlers were killed outright, and the young and attractive front desk staffs were murdered as they stood. The terrorists went to the restaurants, killing people at their tables. An American man was killed before his thirteen-year-old daughter, who was wounded and escaped. She was later hunted down in the hotel and killed. At the Taj Palace, the terrorists went directly to the manager's apartment and killed his wife and young children. The final report also established that despite the loss of his family, the manager remained at his post for the duration of the attack. Fires were set in the hotels, and people were killed in their rooms or trying to escape. Some survived by locking their rooms and hiding. One could hardly imagine the horror of those seventy-six hours for all who were caught up in the slaughter and their anxious families on the outside.

Pakistan's immediate response was to deny that the attackers were from Pakistan, even though Azam Amir Kasav, who had been wounded and apprehended by the Mumbai police, admitted that he was from a village in Pakistan. Within a few weeks the claims of the Pakistani government that the attack had not been planned or carried out from Pakistani soil were proven beyond doubt to be blatant lies. A satellite cell phone found in one of the rubber dinghies used by the terrorists to come ashore in Mumbai provided incontrovertible evidence. The joint team produced a map of northern India and Pakistan that showed bright

yellow dots indicating where the phone had been each day for the previous four weeks. The phone had never left Pakistan. It had been in the border areas where terrorist training camps were known to be located until a few days before the attack. Then the phone had gone to a particular house on a named street in Karachi, and from there to the Karachi harbor and down the coast of India to Mumbai.

This and other revelations forced Pakistan out of its denial mode. It was forced to acknowledge that the attack was carried out by Pakistani nationals who had planned the attack on Pakistani soil. Yet it still denied government involvement, and the official position of the US government remained that of no smoking gun having been found in Pakistan. Such was and apparently still is the capacity for denial in the US Department of State, the National Security Council, and the CIA.

Meanwhile, the FBI and Mumbai police completed their work in assembling the dossier of evidence implicating the government of Pakistan and distributed it to each of the eleven countries that lost citizens in the attack. The joint effort of the FBI and the Indian authorities marked a critical turning point in US-India counterterrorism cooperation. Home Minister Chidambaram, reappointed minister of home affairs following the Indian general election of May 2009, has continued the effort with the FBI, and I have no doubt that from the tragedy in Mumbai yet another dimension of the US-India strategic partnership will build greater trust and stronger counterterrorism cooperation for the future.



## About the Author

Ambassador David Mulford is a distinguished visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University. In this role, he focuses on global economic and political events, and as chair of Hoover's US-India relations program, he concentrates his efforts on economic growth and transformative relations between India and the United States.

Prior to joining the Hoover Institution, Mulford was chairman and CEO of Credit Suisse Europe, responsible for leading the worldwide, large-scale privatization business and other corporate and government advisory assignments. Mulford also served for ten years with the Saudi Arabia Monetary Agency (SAMA) as senior investment advisor, managing the investment of Saudi oil revenues and developing a comprehensive investment program.

In 1984 Mulford left Saudi Arabia to serve for nine years in the administrations of presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush as assistant secretary and under secretary of Treasury for international affairs. Among his responsibilities were coordinating economic policies with G-7 industrial nations, chairing the administrations' yen/dollar negotiations, acting as senior advisor for financial negotiations with Russia and other states of the former Soviet Union, and providing leadership of the administrations' Latin America debt strategy (the Baker and Brady plans) and President Bush's Enterprise for the Americas.

Mulford also led the US delegation to negotiate the establishment of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, as well as led G-7 negotiations to reduce Poland's official bilateral debt in 1991.

In 2003 President George W. Bush nominated Mulford as US ambassador to India, at a time when India-US relations were undergoing a dramatic shift and the strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington was gaining momentum.

During his tenure, India achieved unprecedented cooperation with the United States and exponential growth in business, trade, health, finance, science, agriculture, and education. Ambassador Mulford was deeply involved in negotiating the United States–India Civil Nuclear Agreement to its conclusion in 2008.

Mulford holds a DPhil degree from Oxford University and an MA in political science from Boston University and graduated cum laude with a BA in economics from Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Prior to earning his doctorate, he conducted graduate studies in 1960 at the University of Cape Town, South Africa. Bringing to fruition his keen interest in the peaceful transition from White-minority rule to Black-majority government and independence in Central Africa, he published two books on Zambia and Northern Rhodesia.

While at the Treasury Department, Mulford was awarded the Legion d'Honneur from President François Mitterrand of France, the Order of May from President Carlos Menem of Argentina, and the Officer's Cross of the Medal of Merit from President Lech Walesa of Poland. Upon departing the Treasury, he received the Alexander Hamilton Award, the highest honor bestowed by the Secretary of the Treasury, for extraordinary service and benefit to the Treasury Department and the nation. He was also awarded an honorary doctorate of laws from Lawrence University. In 2007 the US Department of State awarded Mulford the Sue M. Cobb Award for exemplary diplomatic service in recognition of his extraordinary efforts as a noncareer ambassador in using private-sector leadership and management skills to make a significant impact on US-India bilateral relations.

In 2014 Ambassador Mulford published *Packing for India: A Life of Action in Global Finance and Diplomacy*.