

Q and A: President George W. Bush's visit to India and Pakistan

Q: What is the significance of President Bush's trip to India? Is this a turning point in the U.S.-India relationship?

A: Metaphorically, US-Indian relations have had many turning points, ranging from aloofness during the Cold War, to a close strategic relationship immediately after the 1962 India-China border conflict, to hostility during the 1970s (when India was seen, incorrectly, as an ally of the Soviet Union), to a gradual thawing over the last fifteen years.

This visit *could* be seen as such a turning point if it leads to a reaffirmation, and acceptance, of the global vision that the Bush administration laid out for an emerging India. This was most clearly stated in Secretary of State Rice's *Washington Post* article of 12 December 2005, where she wrote that India is going to take its place as one of the five major world powers. This is the same vision articulated over the last hundred years by many Indian leaders, notably by Jawaharlal Nehru in *The Discovery of India*. If the visit is successful, it will contribute both to American understanding of the "new" India (a process initiated by Bill Clinton's successful visit of 2000), and to an easing of Indian concerns that the US opposes India's rise.

Q: What is the status of the nuclear agreement that was announced on July 18, 2005?

A: Differences over nuclear policy still plague the relationship. Washington placed many obstacles in the path of Indian scientists after the 1974 nuclear tests, and tried to force India to sign the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). India, in turn, had a covert nuclear weapons program buried within its supposedly peaceful civilian energy program, and has always regarded the NPT as discriminatory. India's record is good as far as exports are concerned, but it did demonstrate to other states, notably Iran, that a military nuclear program could be concealed within a civilian one. The nuclear agreement attempts to cut through this past history, and offer to India a tailor-made "regime" outside of the NPT. This will acknowledge India's military nuclear status, and allow India to accept help for its civilian nuclear program, but it will require India to separate its

civil and military programs and assume other obligations of NPT members.

The agreement may take weeks, or even months, to conclude. Still to be determined is exactly which nuclear facilities are military and which are civilian, and hence subject to international inspection. Complicating this negotiation is the problem of India determining exactly "how much is enough," i.e. how many nuclear weapons (and what types) does India need. Since this is as much a psychological as well as a military problem, the answer cannot be expected without considerably more debate and discussion within India itself.

Q: What will be the major items on the agenda?

A: As far as can be determined, all of the agenda items are agreed upon, and most (except for the nuclear 'deal') are already concluded. There will be announcements concerning the expanded US-India cooperation in agriculture, on countering terrorism, on expanding democracy, and on an expansion of technology transfer and trade and investment.

Q: How is the President's trip viewed in India?

A: Except for a small group critical of the nuclear 'deal', and the traditional leftist opposition to the United States, America is very positively viewed by Indians. There are many critics of American policies in the Middle East and Iraq, but overwhelmingly Washington is seen positively, and Bush is very much seen as a friend of India. Increasingly, Indians are being educated in the United States, and the two-million strong Indian-American community serves as something of a bridge between the two countries.

Q: Has there been a realignment of India's foreign policy? How much consensus is there among the establishment?

Changes in Indian foreign policy resemble the slow turning of a giant ship—adjustments are barely perceptible, but over time it has become clear that India is charting a new course. It no longer sees its goal of an Asian and global role as being blocked by the United States, but sees America as a possible facilitator of that role. However, some of the passengers still long for the old course, and others are afraid of change—but led by some in the

government and the business community, and many in the media, India is slowly adjusting to its new international role.

Q: What is on the President's agenda on his visit to Pakistan?

A: President Bush's goal will be to remain engaged with Pakistan, while edging it towards greater cooperation in the struggle against terrorism. However, Pakistan is not an ideal ally. In his speech on February 22nd to the Asia Society, Bush gave an implicit warning to his "friend" and ally when he noted that even the Pakistani media, while free, were sometimes harassed by security forces; Bush also cautioned states not to succumb to mob violence, and especially to protect diplomats, a reference to current and past attacks on embassies and innocent parties. Bush will praise Musharraf, the military leader who has done much to stabilize his country, but there remains concern about extremists and terrorists who operate from Pakistani territory.

Q: What is the political situation in Pakistan? Is there opposition to the President's visit?

There is widespread anger in Pakistan against the United States, and against President Bush. This stems from opposition to the American presence in Afghanistan (especially strong in Pakistan's bordering provinces of NWFP and Balochistan), against the invasion of Iraq, and against what is seen as general hostility to the Islamic world. Some Pakistanis feel that the US has abandoned democracy when it comes to Pakistan, and recent riots and violence against the Danish cartoons are likely to continue until Bush's visit. However, many Pakistanis have ties to the United States, and seek American help in restoring democracy and promoting a better relationship with India.

President/General Musharraf is in an increasingly difficult position. He is under mounting pressure from ethnic, religious, sectarian, and regional groups, and most of the political parties; he must retain the confidence of his army subordinates; he needs American help and support, but does not want to be seen as subordinating Pakistani interests to American ones.

Q: Is the President likely to visit Afghanistan?

A: While not yet announced, such a visit, if only for a few hours, is very likely, as there are significant American and NATO forces engaged in Afghanistan, and Bush may want to show his support for the besieged Karzai government.

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