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U.S.-India Initiative Series
India, the United States and the Global Commons

By C. Raja Mohan



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This paper is one of a series commissioned in conjunction with a major Center for a New American Security (CNAS) study on the future of the U.S.-India relationship. The study, co-chaired by former Deputy Secretary of State Richard L. Armitage and former Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns, and directed by CNAS Senior Fellow Richard Fontaine, has produced a comprehensive blueprint for the next phase of the U.S.-India strategic relationship. The full text of the final report can be found at www.cnas.org.

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By C. Raja Mohan

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Since the inauguration of Barack Obama in January 2009, supporters of strategic cooperation between India and the United States have expressed frustration at the absence of a “big idea” that could impart new momentum to the positive relationship developed between the two countries during the presidency of George W. Bush. Critics of the Obama administration, in both Delhi and Washington, have pointed repeatedly to Bush’s strategic warmth toward India and its apparent absence under his successor. In addition, they argue that Obama has tended to privilege China over India when dealing with global issues and Islamabad over Delhi on regional issues involving the subcontinent. Senior administration officials challenge these arguments, noting, for example, that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was Obama’s first state guest at the White House in November 2009. They also point to Obama’s decision to move ahead with implementation of the controversial Indo-U.S. civil nuclear initiative unveiled by Bush in 2005, despite considerable reservations in the American non-proliferation community and from elements within the Democratic Party’s foreign policy establishment.

Others in Washington argue that the initial approaches of the Obama administration toward China and Pakistan have not accomplished their aims – and that, as a result, New Delhi has emerged as a relatively more attractive partner for Washington in both East and Southwest Asia. Administration supporters point to the first round of the strategic dialogue held in Washington

during early June 2010, which brought the Indian and U.S. governments together and laid the framework for substantive engagement in the coming years. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who regularly affirms the administration’s commitment to the partnership, led the strategic dialogue on the American side. And in an effort to demonstrate his enthusiasm for the U.S. relationship with India, President Obama broke protocol by visiting the State Department, where the dialogue was taking place. While there, he announced a visit to India in November 2010. Two months later, U.S. Under Secretary of State William Burns articulated a comprehensive vision for the Indo-U.S. partnership: “Never has there been a moment when India and America mattered more to one another,” he said. “And never has there been a moment when partnership between India and America mattered more to the rest of the globe. As two of the world’s leading democracies, we can help build a new global commons – an international system in which other democracies can flourish, human dignity is advanced, poverty is reduced, trade is expanded, our environment is preserved, violent extremists are marginalized, the spread of weapons of mass destruction is curbed, and new frontiers in science and technology are explored. That is the moment, and the promise, that lies before us.”¹

Although the Obama administration has fended off the perception of a lack of interest in India, questions remain about how the administration proposes to strengthen the Indo-U.S. relationship. As noted earlier, much attention has centered on the need for a “big idea” similar to the one that animated the relationship during President Bush’s second term. Senior Obama administration officials aver that the relationship is free of major problems and argue that a single big idea is unnecessary.² As U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Michèle Flournoy argued, the “U.S.-India relationship is not built on, and cannot be sustained on, grand gestures or brief moments of

crisis.” She continued, “This bond is grounded in common democratic values and converging interests that make India and [the] U.S. natural partners. The U.S. and India have an overarching shared interest in promoting global stability and security.”³

Still, agreement on a big idea would help sustain public support in both countries for the Indo-U.S. partnership. Moreover, it would rejuvenate the bilateral ties that distinguished Bush’s second term. A mutually acceptable framework would also prevent the national security bureaucracy in Washington from reverting to its long-held view of India as neither an ally nor an adversary of the United States. In India, too, without pressure to improve relations with the United States, the enthusiasm for engaging Washington that Prime Minister Singh has been able to generate will steadily dissipate.⁴ At the same time, the Obama administration is preoccupied with two wars – in Afghanistan and Iraq – and a severe economic crisis. Meanwhile, Delhi seems distracted, despite the successful return of the Singh government to power in 2009, and the ruling Congress Party appears divided over its political priorities. These two large democracies, which have never been allies or close partners in the international arena, may need an ambitious agenda to spur them toward greater cooperation.

Strategic cooperation in the global commons could be the much-needed framework for setting the next stage in Indo-U.S. relations. Defining this framework should be at the top of the agenda for President Obama’s upcoming visit to India. Unlike the civil nuclear initiative, which involved changes to both U.S. domestic non-proliferation law and the guidelines of the 46-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group, a bilateral initiative on the global commons would not require immediate action by either the U.S. Congress or the international community, which could prove difficult to achieve. Such an initiative would strengthen the international order and overcome the perception in sections of the U.S. foreign policy establishment that the civilian nuclear

deal has undermined the global non-proliferation regime.

This paper begins with a brief overview of the unfolding debate on the global commons in the United States and some of the recent challenges to American primacy. Next it will examine the emergence of a new awareness in India of the importance of the global commons, along with its increasing rejection of the “third worldism” that for decades put Delhi at odds with Washington in multilateral forums. It then discusses the recent evolution in Indo-U.S. maritime cooperation and concludes with several recommendations that could facilitate future cooperation on the global commons.

Fading U.S. Command of the Commons

The oceans, air, outer space, and cyberspace are widely acknowledged as the four major “global commons” that are outside the control of any one or more states, but that are vital for the smooth conduct of national and international life. Ensuring order in the commons has always been a main function of the hegemonic powers in the international system, a function that two Anglo-Saxon powers – Great Britain and the United States – have performed with considerable aplomb for more than two centuries. There is a growing recognition, however, that American primacy in the commons and the ability of the United States to maintain order within them are coming under increasing stress. Addressing instability in the global commons, it has been argued in Washington, should be at the top of America’s list of national security priorities. In addition, the United States must find strong partners to help manage the global commons, given the challenges posed by both rising powers and non-state actors.⁵

The criticality of the commons in international relations has risen in direct proportion to the globalization of national economies in the last few centuries. As capitalism dawned in Europe, it began to connect dispersed economic communities first in

Europe and then in the world at large. The first age of globalization saw the emergence of the world's seas as a global common. The oceans, which were not under the sovereignty of any one nation, linked geographically dispersed zones of natural resources, industrial production centers and markets for consumption. As the great American navalist Alfred Thayer Mahan put it, the sea represents a "wide common, over which men may pass in all directions." For Mahan, the sea lines of communications constituted the most important element in a country's strategy, whether economic, political or military. He argued that the essence of sea power lies in the control of vital sea-lanes and geographic features, such as islands and coastal seaports, from which warships could protect or threaten seaborne traffic in goods and people.⁶ Not surprisingly, the great powers of the 19th and 20th centuries competed vigorously for maritime dominance. For more than two hundred years, Britain and then the United States maintained their dominance over the seas.

A recent report on the global commons published by the Center for a New American Security treats air and space as separate commons.⁷ The former emerged as a common good in the mid-20th century, and continues to be exploited for both its civilian and military uses. As rapid technological advances shrank geographical distances, regulating and managing the air domain became necessary. The United States, as the world's dominant power and leader in aviation technologies after World War II, led the way in creating the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and establishing the standards for usage of the air commons. As outer space became accessible in the late 1950s, the United States was again at the forefront of drafting the rules to govern its civilian and military uses. In defining a regime for outer space, the United States had to work with or around the Soviet Union, which possessed matching capabilities in space technologies. With the worlds of computers and

communications now merging into a single cyberspace on which significant parts of its economy and national security depend, the United States has begun to debate the importance of establishing a new international regime to govern its use.

The globalization of China's and India's economies, with their emphasis on external trade, has dramatically increased the role of the seas in international commerce and global economic stability.

The latest phase of globalization has produced growing international reliance on assets in cyberspace and outer space for many aspects of modern life. Meanwhile the globalization of China's and India's economies, with their emphasis on external trade, has dramatically increased the role of the seas in international commerce and global economic stability.

Despite their rising importance, the commons have never looked as vulnerable as they do today. Whether it is terrorists targeting civilian air traffic, pirates threatening vital sea-lanes, or cyber militias attacking computer networks, the capacity of small but well-organized groups to disrupt vital common spaces has increased significantly. These threats are not limited to non-state actors. Rising powers and regional actors that fear the United States and its power have adopted asymmetric strategies to probe American vulnerabilities in the global commons. These include China's and Iran's anti-access strategies in waters near each country, China's attempts

to develop anti-satellite weapons, and Beijing and Moscow's investments in cyber warfare.

These developments have raised questions about the ability of the United States to remain the principal arbiter of the global commons. For nearly seven decades, American leadership in maritime, air, space and cyber technologies has allowed the United States to keep the commons open for international commercial use and to lead the regimes governing these spaces. U.S. command of the commons has also been an essential underpinning of American military hegemony in the international system.⁸ The big question now is: How might the unfolding redistribution of power in the international system affect both the United States' command of the commons and its military hegemony? Rising powers and spreading military capabilities will chip away at American hegemony, which in turn will reduce the United States' ability to maintain order in the commons. Therefore, if the emerging multipolar world is the main threat to the stability of the global commons, the answer to the question above must be deeper U.S. engagement with rising powers and pivotal actors. Such engagement will involve strengthening old alliances and building new partnerships, as well as using both carrots and sticks to convince adversarial powers to act responsibly in the management of the commons.⁹

As the United States explores the development of a new strategy toward the commons, where does India fit in? Policymakers in Washington and Delhi are debating the answer to this fundamental question. Some in the United States have begun to see India as a natural partner in securing the commons. Making the case for a stronger defense partnership with India, Undersecretary Flournoy recently noted, "we will look at ways in which, together, we can better secure the global commons by expanding our already robust cooperation, in air, space, cyberspace, and maritime initiatives."¹⁰ A few weeks earlier, Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao remarked, "the United States and India have an

interest in protecting the global commons – maritime, cyber, and space domains. The free flow of information and trade across these global commons is vital for both our economies. Our naval forces have been working with each other in ensuring the safety and security of shipping lanes of communication, including in the Gulf of Aden. We need also to create appropriate norms for cyberspace to ensure that the freedom and anonymity provided by these pathways are not misused. Our space agencies have had fruitful cooperation in the past, and there is immense potential for the future."¹¹ These statements are at best a preliminary recognition of the possibilities for Indo-U.S. cooperation in the commons. Realizing such cooperation will require significant shifts in attitudes and policies in both Delhi and Washington.

Growing Capabilities, Lagging Policies

As a result of its growing technological and industrial capabilities, India is poised to make a significant contribution to managing the global commons. Thanks to an ambitious strategy, the Indian Navy is already among the top-five navies in the world.¹² At a time when Western powers are downsizing their navies, India (along with China) is growing as a major maritime power. India's naval influence in the Indian Ocean is already significant and is likely to increase incrementally in the Western Pacific. Its space program, too, is impressive. From building and launching commercial satellites to sending lunar probes, the Indian space program spans the full spectrum of civilian space activities. In recent years, India has begun to invest in military uses of outer space, including the development of advanced air defense missiles, the rudiments of missile defense and the development of satellites for military reconnaissance and communication.¹³

In the cyber domain, India has carved out a niche not merely as a destination for the outsourcing of back-office work but also as a center for advanced research in information technology and

communications research. Although India lags behind China and Russia in the development of cyber warfare capabilities, it has begun to devote greater attention to this increasingly significant issue.¹⁴ Despite India's widely acknowledged potential to influence the global commons, some U.S. policymakers question whether India is ready to give up its non-aligned status and take a leadership role in securing these common spaces.

As India's power grows increasingly consequential for the international system, the tension between its rising power capabilities and its self-image as a weak, third-world state is playing itself out.

As India's power grows increasingly consequential for the international system, the tension between its rising power capabilities and its self-image as a weak, third-world state is playing itself out. This tension was in full view during the exhaustive debate on the Indo-U.S. civilian nuclear initiative and, more broadly, on the meaning and nature of India's strategic partnership with the United States. During this debate, both conservatives and liberals in India's political class expressed opposition to the creation of a stronger relationship with the United States. Insisting that India maintain its third-world focus, elements within its foreign and security establishments voiced skepticism that the United States would agree to make India a partner in the management of the nuclear order, let alone

the global order. These reservations illuminate the difficulties surrounding the civilian nuclear pact in Delhi, which many in the West considered a sweet-heart deal for India.

During 2005–2008, considerable political resistance emerged within India regarding the notion of expanded defense cooperation with the United States, especially in the domain of multilateral military operations outside the framework of the United Nations. At great personal and political risk, however, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh pushed forward with his plan to reform India's foreign and security policies. As Premier Singh seeks to consolidate the structural changes in Indian foreign policy engineered during his first term, a debate has developed within the Indian strategic community about how India should think about its global responsibilities and how it should redefine its positions on a range of multilateral issues. Discussing the rise of China and India, National Security Adviser Shivshankar Menon recently questioned whether the two nations are "willing and capable of contributing to global public goods in terms of security, growth and stability." He asked rhetorically, "Asia has proved that she can do the economics. Can she also do the politics that come with power?"¹⁵ Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue on Asian security a few weeks later, Menon expanded on his thinking:

Managing the security of the global commons – outer space, the oceans, cyberspace, and global transport and communication networks – today there is hardly any aspect of our lives that is not touched by outer space or by information technology. As this intensifies, we have seen a steady technological shift in favor of the offence over defence in both these domains. There are major issues regarding the placement of weapons in space, and of weapons designed to attack space-based assets. Military uses of space-based assets for intelligence, reconnaissance and communications are a reality, where we are at a point where

rules of the road are required as soon as possible... To us in India, it appears that only collective effort can meet such common challenges, which require new global partnerships involving those powers with the capacity to address these issues. In each of these areas new paradigms are necessary to cope with the changes wrought by technology, and by shifts in the balance of power. The world order defined by World War II or Cold War victors no longer suffices.¹⁶

Maritime Engagement

Despite the absence of an agreed plan during the Bush years to protect the global commons, India and the United States engaged in significant cooperation in the security sphere, especially between their two navies. This deepening maritime engagement could provide the basis for a broad-based India-U.S. partnership in managing the global commons. The Indian Navy was among the first to recognize the implications of India's shift to a more international focus in the early 1990s: it moved quickly to break out of the military isolationism of the non-aligned era and began maritime engagement with major powers, regional actors and the smaller states of the Indian Ocean littoral. Also in the early 1990s, the United States initiated a program of military exchanges with India. During the administration of Bill Clinton, despite interest in Washington for greater naval cooperation, the military relationship between India and the United States remained tentative and was overshadowed by non-proliferation concerns in the United States. Viewing India through a geopolitical lens, the Bush administration was determined to rapidly expand military cooperation with Delhi. India reciprocated with offers to lend military support to the United States in the conduct of military operations in Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

Given the primacy of geographic considerations, Washington chose Pakistan as its primary partner in Afghanistan instead of India. Still determined to expand military cooperation in other areas, the

United States and India looked to the maritime domain. In an effort to support Operation Enduring Freedom, India began escorting high-value naval assets through the Malacca Straits, despite reservations in Delhi and among some littoral states. The massive tsunami that struck at the end of 2004 opened the door for unprecedented Indo-U.S. cooperation as well as multilateral efforts with Australia and Japan. India's decision to cooperate with the United States and its allies outside a United Nations mandate and on short notice encouraged Washington to explore a broader-based framework for defense cooperation in June 2005.¹⁷ These efforts culminated in the drafting of a maritime security framework in 2006 during Bush's trip to India.¹⁸

India's expanding engagement with the U.S. Navy also contributed to the evolution of Indian maritime thinking about the Indian Ocean. From its knee-jerk opposition in the 1970s and 1980s to any foreign military presence in the Indian Ocean, India began talking about engaging all the major actors in the littoral, both foreign and local. Recognizing the long-term interests of India as a trading nation dependent on the seas, the Indian Navy started moving away from its traditional emphasis on extending state sovereignty and toward keeping the maritime commons open. India published its official document outlining India's maritime strategy – "Freedom to Use the Seas" – in 2007. In many ways, this strategy reflects the ideas that guided the British Raj, with their emphasis on providing public goods and discarding the ideological baggage associated with being a weak, third-world state. With its stepped-up efforts beginning in late 2008 to protect the sea-lanes of communication in the Gulf of Aden that were being threatened by pirates, the Indian Navy emphasized the need to protect the global maritime commons through cooperation with other nations, both regional and extra-regional.¹⁹ The Navy has also begun to emphasize the importance of assisting the smaller states in the Indian Ocean and the Pacific in protecting the

maritime commons. As India's naval chief told an international gathering in 2009, "Our capability enhancement and capacity building initiatives with Sri Lanka, [the] Seychelles, Maldives and Mauritius have adequately enabled them to deal with many of their security concerns on their own. I am convinced that, as India grows in economic and military stature, it would have to take upon itself the role of further equipping its neighbors in ways that would not only enhance their own security but contribute positively to regional stability as well."²⁰ Although India's political leaders hesitated in supporting membership in the Proliferation Security Initiative, the Navy recognized the significance of policing the sea-lanes against illicit trafficking in materials related to weapons of mass destruction. As a result, many of the annual Malabar maritime exercises with the U.S. Navy have involved interdiction and search and seizure functions associated with the Proliferation Security Initiative.

The evolution of Indian thinking has coincided with the affirmation of a new maritime strategy in the United States emphasizing collaboration and cooperation with all major actors in managing the world's oceans. At the same time, some in Washington have argued that the rise of China requires the strengthening of American cooperation with other major powers, especially Asia's democracies.²¹ A comprehensive view of India's evolution since the early 1990s suggests that this globalizing country has begun to reacquire many Anglo-Saxon virtues, including entrepreneurial capitalism, a passion for international trade, an enduring maritime orientation and a commitment to securing the commons.²² This makes India a natural partner for the United States in the future management of the global commons.

Prospects for Future Cooperation

Indo-U.S. cooperation in managing the global commons will depend on a number of factors. One constraint has been concerns in Washington about non-proliferation. The possibilities for extending

A comprehensive view of India's evolution since the early 1990s suggests that this globalizing country has begun to reacquire many Anglo-Saxon virtues, including entrepreneurial capitalism, a passion for international trade, an enduring maritime orientation and a commitment to securing the commons.

Indo-U.S. maritime cooperation to other domains, such as space, have run into a variety of obstacles, including export controls and the American perception of India's place in the various non-proliferation regimes. The logic of President Bush's decision to lift U.S. restrictions on civilian nuclear cooperation with India as part of building a new relationship with Delhi should logically lead to the lifting of U.S. export controls on high-technology transfers to India and the promotion of India's full and equal membership in global non-proliferation regimes. Yet there has been considerable reluctance in Washington, especially within the non-proliferation community, to treat India as a full partner in the management of the international order. That the Nuclear Suppliers Group could embrace Iceland, a financially broke European state, as its forty-sixth member in 2009 but wants to place additional restrictions on India, which is well on its way to becoming one of the world's top economies, points to the twisted logic of the non-proliferation theology. Ending India's anomalous position in the

global non-proliferation system should be one of Obama's top priorities during his upcoming visit.²³ The full integration of India into the non-proliferation system would lay the groundwork for future cooperation in the global commons. In preparation for Obama's visit, Delhi and Washington have agreed to explore possibilities for new understandings on non-proliferation and export controls as well as on the global commons. They have established small bilateral working groups on both the subjects in anticipation of the president's visit. The following is a list of recommendations on issues relating to global commons.

Recommendations

Although India and the United States already enjoy significant maritime cooperation, framing the issues in terms of the Asian and global maritime commons would provide a new basis for deepening cooperation. As vulnerable maritime commons in the Asian littoral come under threat from China's expansive territorial claims and exclusionary interpretations of its exclusive economic zones (EEZs), the need for greater Indo-U.S. naval and maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific has grown urgent. Strengthening India's naval capabilities in the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf is also in the interest of the United States. Although the range of weapons systems that Delhi has begun to acquire from Washington has expanded in recent years, the two sides still need to focus on boosting India's maritime power projection capabilities as part of a new framework for Indo-U.S. burden-sharing in the Asian and global maritime commons. Washington should consider transferring special platforms such as carriers and nuclear-powered submarines, or at least the skills associated with their use, to India. It should also consider assisting India in the development of expeditionary forces and their rapid deployment. Beyond naval military cooperation, U.S. political and diplomatic support will help reinforce India's own fledgling naval diplomacy in the Western Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, South China Sea and the

South Pacific. For their part, Delhi's political classes and the foreign policy establishment should join the Indian Navy in articulating India's political commitment to keeping open the Asian maritime commons. They should also support multilateral endeavors such as the Proliferation Security Initiative, define the principles for participation in coalition operations, remove obstacles to stronger security cooperation with the United States, come out explicitly in favor of freedom of navigation and modify their positions on expanding territorial sovereignty over the oceans.

In contrast to the ocean, space, and cyberspace commons, management of the air commons has not been widely debated. Although both the United States and India have experienced major terrorist attacks from the air, they have devoted little discussion to managing the global aviation regimes. The United States remains the world's largest user of the air commons, but the dramatic expansion of the civil aviation sector in India will make that country a large stakeholder. Meanwhile, continuing innovations by terrorists, the increasing capacity of non-state actors to operate small air forces,²⁴ and the growing range and lethality of air-to-air, surface-to-air missiles and surface-to-surface missiles pose new threats to civil aviation. Indo-U.S. cooperation in the air commons could take many forms. One would be to deepen bilateral cooperation to strengthen India's air civilian and military infrastructure. This would include agreements to transfer best practices on security and safety to India's rapidly expanding civil aviation industry. While there is much interest in the United States about the Indian Air Force's acquisition of 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft, the two sides should be discussing more intensive American participation in India's comprehensive program to modernize its military aviation. The two sides could also enhance air security across the Indian Ocean by assisting smaller states in the region in developing their capacities and improving awareness of the region's air spaces.

With regard to the commons, there is no denying that China is at the core of many U.S. concerns, given its anti-access strategies in the Western Pacific, its development of space warfare capabilities and its extensive capabilities in cyber warfare.

The space commons offer the most consequential possibilities for greater Indo-U.S. cooperation.²⁵ Yet the two sides have been unable to exploit these possibilities because of arguments over non-proliferation, fears about competition from India's commercial launch vehicles, and deep divisions in both countries about the relationship of space to national security strategy. India was one of the first countries to welcome Bush's controversial initiative on missile defense in May 2001, and for a period during the Bush years, India and the United States sought to cooperate on missile defense.²⁶ India's liberal left reacted by seeking the government's reaffirmation of its opposition to space weapons. Nevertheless, by the late 2000s India had begun to test weapons systems relating to missile defense. Beyond its own partisan bickering on missile defense, the United States and its security establishment have been unclear on how far to proceed with India on cooperation in military space technologies. President Obama's upcoming visit presents a prime opportunity for both sides

to unveil a new framework for expanding civilian space cooperation, removing U.S. restrictions on civilian space technology transfers to India, promoting full Indian membership of the Missile Technology Control Regime, beginning a fresh dialogue on the possibilities for cooperation on military uses of space, exploring the prospects for cooperation in modernizing the rules for military and civilian uses of outer space and working together to keep it accessible to all nations.

As the least understood of all the commons, cyberspace demands a substantive conversation between Washington and Delhi. The link between the information technology and knowledge sectors of the two economies continues to grow, and they have every incentive to explore cooperation in protecting cyberspace from threats emanating from state and non-state actors. If Washington is looking for a like-minded partner to stabilize and secure cyberspace, Delhi is a natural choice. Potential cooperation could involve all dimensions of the unfolding challenge, including corporate security, national security and law enforcement. The two sides could consider building on the current European convention on cybercrime, creating a framework for cooperation against cyber terrorism, deepening bilateral cooperation on dealing with military cyber threats from well-organized state actors and devising the first rudimentary arms control regime for the cyber commons.

In all of these areas, the role of China looms large over the prospects for India-U.S. cooperation in the global commons. In both India and the United States, deep divisions have surfaced between those who think that balancing China has become an urgent imperative and those who argue that there is no alternative to engagement. With regard to the commons, there is no denying that China is at the core of many U.S. concerns, given its anti-access strategies in the Western Pacific, its development of space warfare capabilities and its extensive capabilities in cyber warfare.²⁷ At the same time, some

observers argue that Washington needs Beijing's help in managing the commons. Some would argue that the authoritarian nature of China's regime represents a major threat to the global commons; others would insist that stability in the commons must be pursued without regard to how the major powers are governed. Washington and Delhi, then, need to reach a functional understanding on how to think about China when contemplating efforts to cooperate in the global commons. The best outcome would include greater Indo-U.S. cooperation in the commons and an environment in which non-democratic powers such as China can be persuaded to follow agreed-upon norms for managing the seas, air, outer space and cyberspace.

Conclusion

President Obama's visit to India represents an extraordinary opportunity to build political will in both Washington and Delhi for a comprehensive partnership in managing the global commons, an area that is becoming central to international security. Such an effort would encourage the two countries to work together on a range of issues relating to the global commons. It could very well launch a new era of cooperation on global and multilateral issues, even as it opens the door for a more intensive bilateral engagement in the high-technology and defense sectors. In Washington, cooperation on the global commons would bridge Bush's emphasis on balance of power politics and Obama's preference for multilateralism and global governance. In Delhi, it has the potential to connect India's traditional universalism with its new responsibilities as a rising power and further enhance its relationship with the United States.

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