Robert M. Hathaway

Unfinished Passage: India, Indian Americans, and the U.S. Congress

Only half-jokingly, Representative Gary L. Ackerman (D-N.Y.), former cochair of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, claims that until recently most members of the U.S. Congress believed that "IndiaPakistan" was a single word. This assertion of course exaggerates the paucity of South Asia knowledge prevalent on Capitol Hill for much of the past half-century. Ackerman's jest does, nonetheless, underscore what has been a painful fact of life for many in India: 50 years into its national existence, their country has seldom commanded the attention, let alone the respect, of the U.S. Congress that its standing as the world's largest democracy demands.

The point of Ackerman's quip, however, is that this neglect is rapidly fading. Today, India can identify scores of U.S. legislators who publicly and proudly declare their friendship for New Delhi. More than a quarter of the members of the House of Representatives have joined an informal congressional caucus, one of whose principal goals is to promote close Indo-U.S. ties. Congressional travel to India has jumped dramatically over the past half-dozen years. Legislative attempts to cut U.S. foreign aid to India—long an annual tradition in the House of Representatives—now produce lopsided votes in favor of continued U.S. assistance and are remarkable chiefly for the spectacle of members of Congress elbowing each other out of the way (figuratively if not quite literally) to reach the microphone to denounce such efforts.

Not even India's May 1998 nuclear tests stemmed this tide of congressional support for New Delhi. Most legislators conceded that then-President Bill Clinton had little choice but to invoke the Glenn amendment, which

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imposed extensive economic and military sanctions on New Delhi (and following Pakistan's tests, on Islamabad as well).[1] Yet the ink on the presidential orders triggering sanctions was hardly dry before members of Congress began to voice doubts about the wisdom of an action their own legislation had mandated. Over the next year and a half, Congress adopted a series of measures easing the Glenn amendment sanctions. By the fall of 1999, legislators had given Clinton authority to waive the entire package of penalties slapped on New Delhi the previous year. All, apparently, was forgiven.

Of course, things on Capitol Hill are never this straightforward. Even as long-time analysts of Indo-U.S. relations marvel at the past decade's change in congressional attitudes, genuine knowledge on the Hill about South Asia remains woefully shallow. On the region's most volatile issue, for instance, most U.S. legislators "have an understanding of Kashmir that is about one sentence deep," according to one well-placed source. A congressional aide with extensive experience in the region is even less charitable, judging that most members of Congress "wouldn't know India or Pakistan if they came up and bit them on the ass."

Even if this harsh verdict overstates the case, it does accurately reflect an important reality: members of Congress possessing a well-developed strategic vision of South Asia, and of U.S. interests in the region, are still very much the exception. For all the apparent change in congressional attitudes toward the Indian subcontinent, and notwithstanding the new prominence of the Indian American community, the majority of U.S. legislators remain remarkably oblivious to the one-fifth of humanity for whom South Asia is home. Ackerman's "IndiaPakistan" may have passed from congressional discourse, but the foundations on the Hill for a solid Indo-U.S. partnership remain unsteady.

Indifference Becomes Keen Interest

Recent years have witnessed what may prove to be a fundamental reordering of Indo-U.S. ties. Clinton's widely acclaimed (in India, at any rate) visit in early 2000 represented the first presidential trip to the subcontinent in more than two decades. Six months later, Indian prime minister Atal Behari Vajpayee experienced all the trappings of an official state visit to Washington, where he was feted by the U.S. political, economic, and entertainment elite and invited to address a joint session of Congress. India is suddenly fashionable in Washington; Indo-U.S. ties are widely celebrated as one of the edifices on which the twenty-first century will rest.

It was not always this way, particularly on Capitol Hill. More often than not, U.S. legislators of an earlier era viewed the subcontinent through a lens

having more to do with U.S. preoccupations than with South Asian realities. Many Americans saw the region primarily in terms of the Cold War competition with the Soviet Union. Pakistan was a valued ally while India, for reasons most members of Congress found utterly inexplicable, was entirely too cozy with Moscow.

The Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the lessening of Soviet-U.S. tensions, and finally the collapse of the Soviet Union encouraged U.S. lawmakers to break out of their habit of viewing the subcontinent through a Cold War prism. Following India's economic liberalization and market-opening program beginning in 1991, Capitol Hill suddenly discovered new South Asian markets for U.S. goods. Congressional thinking about the region slowly began to shift.

In addition, the 1990s witnessed a new phenomenon in U.S. congressional politics. For the first time, members of the Senate and especially the House of Representatives concluded that increased attention to the Indian subcontinent could bring benefits in the U.S. political arena. This realization had two immediate results. First, it prompted greater congressional interest in South Asia. Second, it accelerated the dramatic shift in congressional sympathies already underway. U.S. lawmakers moved away from the pro-Pakistan stance that had prevailed throughout much of the Cold War, and especially during the war in Afghanistan, and toward a perspective tilted much more toward India.

The Indian American Community

This new politically inspired interest in the region reflected significant changes within the Indian American community. Boasting large numbers of professionals—doctors, dentists, scientists, engineers, entrepreneurs, and computer and software specialists—the community had become increasingly affluent by the last decade of the century. It was better organized, more politically active, and devoted more attention to making its views known on Capitol Hill. Most strikingly, it was larger: As recently as 1980, there were only 387,000 Indian Americans in the United States, but by 1997, this figure had more than tripled to 1,215,000. By the later date, the Indian American community constituted the third-largest Asian American population in the country, surpassed only by Chinese and Filipino Americans. The Pakistani American community, by contrast, was only about one-tenth the size of the Indian American community.[2]

The educational achievement and economic status of the Indian American community is equally striking. Fifty-eight percent of the adult community has at least a bachelor's degree (compared to 21.5 percent of whites). A

larger percentage of the Indian American work force holds a managerial or professional position than any other group in the country, with especially high representation among the more remunerative professions. Reflecting their concentration in the medical, scientific, and computer fields, the per capita income of Indian Americans exceeds that of every other group in the country (including whites) except Japanese Americans.[3]

Indian Americans have translated this wealth and status into political clout only in the past few years. Because the community is relatively evenly distributed throughout the country, few congressional districts are without at least a handful of Indian American families. The largest concentrations, however, reside in the major industrial-urban states of New York, New Jersey, California, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Illinois, Texas, Florida, and Massachusetts. As a whole, the community has avoided identification with either of the major political parties and has given generously to both. Indian Americans raised $4 million on behalf of political candidates for the 1992 election; six years later, this figure had almost doubled to more than $7 million. Undoubtedly, the total for the 2000 election was higher still.[4] "By their engagement and their aggressiveness," Senator Sam Brownback (R-Kans.) has observed, "they're able to influence things beyond their numbers."[5]

Genuine knowledge on Capitol Hill about South Asia remains woefully shallow.

The clout of this newly mobilized bloc of voters was evident in the summer of 1999 when the House International Relations Committee took up a resolution dealing with the Pakistani-backed incursion into the Kargil sector of Indian Kashmir. Indian American computer professionals, urging a condemnation of Pakistani actions, organized an e-mail campaign that startled congressional offices. One staffer reported receiving 400 e-mails in a 24-hour period. Although this congressional aide was irritated rather than persuaded by the messages, the potential impact of a mobilized and technologically savvy bloc of voters did not escape notice.

Indian American professional organizations are also actively reaching out to their Washington representatives. The American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin (AAPI), the Indian American Friendship Council, the Asian American Hotel Owners Association, and similar groups host legislative conferences in Washington each year, which prominent U.S. lawmakers are invited to address. The most recent AAPI conference even sponsored a session on how to lobby Congress. The 1999 Indian American Friendship Council conference was attended by almost 40 U.S. lawmakers and featured speeches by House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-

Mo.), then-House International Relations Committee chairman Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), and Doug Bereuter (R-Nebr.), chairman of the House International Relations' Asia subcommittee. These congressional addresses rarely offer a careful or measured discussion of U.S.-Indian ties. Instead, they are marked by an outpouring of praise for India, condemnation of Pakistani policies, and declarations of devotion to strong Indo-U.S. ties. The Indo-U.S. relationship, Gephardt told council members at the 1999 conference, is possibly the most important bilateral relationship in the world. Although perhaps harmless, such exuberance may mislead members of the Indian American community about the current state or future direction of U.S. policy.

U.S. lawmakers now solicit support in the Indian American community in other ways as well. One community newspaper, *India Abroad*, based in New York but circulated widely throughout the United States and Canada, regularly features brief articles by members of Congress. By providing this forum, the weekly encourages congressional offices to address issues of concern to the Indian American community and to go on record in favor of a close Indo-U.S. partnership. Although some lawmakers appear to view this platform as little more than an opportunity to pander, other legislators have found these articles a useful way to educate themselves and their constituents on domestic as well as foreign policy issues.

This activism, of course, is not to suggest that the Indian American community is any more monolithic in its views than other groups in U.S. politics. Particularly in the 1980s and early 1990s, for instance, an active Sikh presence on the Hill decried harsh Indian actions in Punjab and urged Congress to adopt punitive measures toward New Delhi and to support the creation of an independent "Khalistan" out of the Indian state of Punjab. Dr. Gurmit Singh Aulakh, the orange-turbaned head of the Council of Khalistan, was a familiar figure on Capitol Hill and worked closely with Dan Burton (R-Ind.) and other congressional offices to focus attention on heavy-handed Indian actions in Punjab. Even after conditions in Punjab returned to normal during the 1990s, Aulakh's congressional supporters continued to write letters and draft legislation denouncing Indian actions. In June 1998, 19 legislators from both parties sent a letter to Clinton condemning New Delhi's "miserable record of ethnic cleansing." Two years later, a similar letter signed by 20 lawmakers urged Clinton to place India on the U.S. "terrorism list" and declared it was time for the United States to support "self-determination for all the peoples and nations living under India's brutal rule."[6]

Nonetheless, by the end of the decade, the fissures within the Indian American community—which remains riven by personality conflicts—had not prevented the emergence of a reasonably unified Indian American posi-

tion on most South Asia-related issues on the congressional agenda. It is worth noting that India's large Muslim population operates within this consensus and has not developed a competing voice within the Indian American community in the United States.

Business Weighs In

New Delhi's enhanced standing on Capitol Hill in recent years also reflects a greater interest on the part of the U.S. business community. Although its promise still far exceeds its actual performance, the Indian market, with its alluring prospect of several hundred million middle-class consumers, has attracted the attention of both Wall Street and Main Street. U.S. corporate interests have responded to the efforts of successive Indian governments in the 1990s to move away from the tightly regulated economic policies of the past by expanding their operations in India.

This new interest in trade and commercial opportunities has also encouraged U.S. lawmakers to reconsider their former indifference toward India. Many members of Congress, constantly on the lookout for fresh markets, more jobs for constituents, and greater profits for local businesses, have recently discovered the economic potential of South Asia, India above all. Asked about his interest in the subcontinent, Brownback, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations' Subcommittee on Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs and a rising star in the Republican Party, observes that the health of his state's economy depends heavily on overseas sales. Brownback is hardly alone in this interest in South Asian business opportunities. Traveling legislators, who once shunned the subcontinent, now regularly pass through New Delhi, the financial center of Mumbai (Bombay), and the Indian Silicon Valley in Bangalore. Former senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) recalls that, during his two-plus years as ambassador to India in the 1970s, he received only three visits from members of Congress, and two of these were from legislators who were merely passing through on their way to another destination.[7] A quarter-century later, no less than Gephardt led a congressional trade delegation to India. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.), then the senior Democrat on the House International Relations Committee, led another trade mission to India last year.

The China Card

Security considerations have also contributed to this newfound interest on Capitol Hill. Confronted with the grim scenes from Tiananmen Square at the very moment the Cold War was coming to a close, many members of

Congress from both political parties replaced their concerns about the Soviet Union with similar worries about the People's Republic of China. Some lawmakers turned to India as a potential hedge against an aggressive or hostile China. Others asked if the world's largest democracy and the world's most powerful democracy did not share a value system fundamentally at odds with that espoused by the Communist regime in Beijing.

Legislators skeptical of the Clinton administration's policy of engagement with China frequently were drawn to New Delhi. Brownback, for instance, has been outspoken in his criticism of the manner in which the Clinton administration handled relations with China and India. The White House, he charged in a speech to the U.S.-India Business Council in mid-1999, consistently rewarded China, "a country that has openly and continually challenged U.S. interests and values," while "first ignoring, and now punishing" India. "The inequity in this situation," he contended, "is both striking and counterintuitive. Why reward the country which is aggressively working against everything we stand for, and at the same time punish and blackmail a country with which we share basic values and interests?"[8] Representative Frank Pallone (D-N.J.) has articulated similar sentiments, criticizing the Clinton administration's policy of engaging China, notwithstanding Beijing's many shortcomings, while "at the same time, when it comes to our relations with the world's largest democracy, India, we keep that country at arm's length, ever wary of their intentions and motives."[9] Not all lawmakers, of course, accept the logic of these arguments. Nonetheless, as concerns about China's power and intentions grow, many on the Hill have found a new and compelling reason to value a more collaborative relationship with New Delhi. It is high time, Ackerman has said, to end the U.S. double standard of pandering to China while patronizing India.[10]

The India Caucus

This array of opportunities and anxieties coalesced in the final days of 1992 when Representative Stephen J. Solarz (D-N.Y.), universally regarded as India's most energetic advocate in the Congress, lost his congressional seat.

Pallone—a shrewd politician who due to redistricting had a large Indian American population in his new congressional district—persuaded six other Democrats and Republican Bill McCollum (Fla.) to join him in organizing a Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans. One of the first congressional caucuses devoted to promoting relations with a single country, the group grew more rapidly than Pallone could have envisioned. The Indian American press gave considerable coverage to the fledgling group and encouraged its readers to urge their congressional representatives to join the

organization. Seeing no downside to enlisting in the caucus and sensing an easy way to please constituents, House members readily complied. By mid-1999, the caucus boasted a membership of 115 members, more than one-fourth of the entire House of Representatives.

Invariably referred to as the India caucus, the group promotes both Indo-U.S. relations and other issues of concern to the Indian American community. It is active on immigration, family reunification, and health care issues; and works against discrimination, hate crimes, and glass ceilings. But finding bipartisan consensus on domestic issues is frequently difficult on Capitol Hill, and it is as a foreign policy force that the caucus has become best known. Galvanized in its formative years by Pallone's energetic leadership and his considerable skill for publicizing both the caucus and his own role in Indian American affairs, the organization aggressively argues the case for better U.S.-Indo relations. Pallone's office established an effective information and communications network, distributed talking points, enlisted floor speakers, and lined up votes. Under Pallone's leadership, the caucus provided India, for the first time, with an institutional base of support on Capitol Hill and, according to one analyst, an "anchor to windward."

The Indian market has attracted the attention of both Wall Street and Main Street.

The political clout of the caucus has been nowhere more apparent than in the House's annual consideration of the so-called Burton amendments. Nearly every year, Burton, the conservative Republican who for many years has been India's fiercest critic on the Hill, offers an amendment to the foreign aid bill to reduce or eliminate U.S. assistance to India. These amendments not only tap into anti-India or pro-Pakistani sentiment, but also appeal to the widespread distaste for foreign assistance that permeates Congress. Because Burton usually justifies these measures as a way of compelling New Delhi to improve its human rights behavior, the amendments over the years have garnered support across the political spectrum. Burton has never succeeded in having one of his anti-India measures signed into law, but in 1992, the House did adopt a Burton amendment to eliminate development assistance to India.[11]

By the mid-1990s, however, the shift in congressional attitudes toward India had made Burton's task infinitely more difficult. The turning point occurred in 1996, when the Burton amendment lost by a resounding 169 votes. A year later, a comparable Burton measure lost by 260 votes. Burton apparently got the message and, although he drafted amendments in each of the past three years, he chose not to offer them, thereby sparing himself the

ignominy of further smashing defeats. New Delhi's friends, he ruefully conceded, had organized too overwhelming a force to warrant submitting his amendment; they would "beat me into the ground," he admitted.[12]

When examining congressional views on South Asian issues, it is probably wise not to place too much emphasis on partisan divides. Nearly three-fourths of the members of the India caucus are Democrats, and Democrats over the years have tended to support pro-India measures more often than Republicans. Nonetheless, some of New Delhi's harshest critics also come from the Democratic side of the aisle. Although Gephardt, the Democratic leader in the House, is one of India's most vocal supporters, Representative David Bonior (D-Mich.), the House minority whip, is among New Delhi's most prominent detractors. Senator Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.), who holds a senior leadership position, tried a few years ago, while still a member of the House, to organize a Pakistan caucus. Representative Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.) appears to be overtaking Burton as India's most vitriolic opponent. Finally, African American legislators, nearly all of whom are Democrats, can almost always be found on letters lambasting India's human rights record. In short, for all the upsurge in congressional support for New Delhi in recent years, neither party has found it advantageous to adopt a uniformly pro-India stance.

Further experience has also revealed limits to the effectiveness of the India caucus. The organization is, first of all, a creature of the House only. Members of the Senate, with larger and more diversified constituencies, have so far resisted the temptation to align themselves so decidedly with what is still a numerically modest U.S. ethnic group. Second, although the caucus claims a membership of more than 100, only a couple dozen of these members take an active interest in the affairs of the Indian American community. Although most caucus members cast pro-India votes, their activities on behalf of the community do not extend much beyond that. Indeed, some legislators appear not even to know that their staffs have signed them up for caucus membership.

Personal rivalries may also have undercut the organization's effectiveness, although by its very nature this development is difficult to document. In early 1999, Pallone was forced out as caucus cochair and replaced by Ackerman. (James Greenwood (R-Pa.) was selected cochair at the same time but left active management of the caucus to Ackerman.) A number of caucus members had come to feel that Pallone had used the organization too much as a vehicle for his personal ambitions and hoped to garner for themselves some of the recognition Pallone had gained through his activity. Late last year, a less contentious succession saw the Ackerman-Greenwood team replaced by Jim McDermott (D-Wash.) and Ed Royce (R-Calif.).

Finally, and probably most significantly, the caucus has made its impact felt primarily on the House floor. Yet, much of the real work of the Congress

is completed long before a bill gets to this point. In the case of India-related issues, the appropriations committees of the two houses have usually been the key battleground. Members on these committees, for instance, made the controversial 1999 decision to ease nuclear-related restrictions against Pakistan. Caucus leaders had openly challenged the desirability of granting Islamabad this relief, but in the crucial appropriations arena, the caucus has yet to demonstrate any particular clout, so one should guard against exaggerating its impact.

Generally, for most members of Congress, South Asia remains something of an abstraction, and India primarily a domestic political chit. For instance, it seems House Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-Ill.) extended the invitation to Vajpayee to address a joint session of Congress only after having been persuaded that such a gesture was necessary to keep Clinton and the Democrats from garnering all the political credit in the Indian American community for the prime minister's visit. Reportedly, the speaker was especially influenced by the pleas of Representative Rick Lazio (R-N.Y.), who was in a tight race with First Lady Hillary Clinton for a New York Senate seat and feared that snubbing the prime minister would cost him votes in New York's large Indian American community. Some Indian American leaders are concerned that the community is being manipulated by politicians far more interested in raising campaign funds than in promoting the interests of Indian Americans, but the community has yet to develop a political maturity sophisticated enough to distinguish between its genuine advocates and those lawmakers whose commitment is directly proportional to the size of the political donations they receive.

Executive-Legislative Relations

To a certain extent, the executive branch has welcomed this new congressional interest in South Asia. Once India fell under U.S. sanctions in 1998, for instance, supporters of both India and Pakistan, instead of working at cross-purposes as they frequently do, could unite behind sanctions relief. The administration was able to secure a rollback of the Glenn amendment penalties with relatively little of the effort it had expended in 1995 on a similar amendment that had benefited only Islamabad.

This increased congressional interest has come with a price. There is, regardless of the issue, an inherent tension between the needs of the legislative branch and the desires of the executive branch. Typically, the executive branch wants maximum flexibility and freedom of choice, whereas the inclination on the Hill is to craft legislation to meet every conceivable contingency—and in so doing, to limit the executive's freedom of action. In the

case of South Asia, this tension has manifested itself in Congress's preference for legislating sanctions, such as those contained in the Glenn amendment, that the executive branch (no matter which political party holds power) finds unduly confining.

Following the imposition of the Glenn amendment sanctions in May 1998, this tension resurfaced in the debate over the form of sanctions relief. Both the executive and legislative branches embraced a sanctions rollback, but differed about the extent of that rollback and the means of providing it. In the fall of 1998, the administration sought broad waiver authority extending for several years, but ultimately settled for a limited one-year grant. The issue assumed a somewhat different form in 1999 when the administration desired extended or permanent waiver authority that it could use as it saw fit. This discretion, the reasoning went, would give the executive branch leverage with which to extract concessions from India and Pakistan. Many members of Congress, on the other hand, were sympathetic to the idea of lifting the sanctions altogether, which, paradoxically, would take away the executive branch's flexibility. Some legislators who opposed the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty—Senator Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), for instance—favored long-term congressionally mandated sanctions suspension precisely because they did not wish to give the administration a lever that it might use to press Islamabad or New Delhi to accede to the treaty.

Nonproliferation differences are likely to constrain a true strategic partnership.

These competing priorities revealed themselves once again last year. Brownback, angry because Clinton had not used the authority given him in 1999 to lift the remaining Glenn amendment sanctions against India, sought to move legislation mandating the removal of those penalties. The administration, on the other hand, wanted to retain the promise of sanctions removal in its goody bag of potential rewards as it continued to discuss nonproliferation matters with New Delhi. Although State Department officials deny playing any active role, congressional insiders insist that the administration was able to persuade a friendly Senate Democrat to use parliamentary procedures to block Brownback's measure from coming to a vote that in all likelihood the Kansan would have won. Once more, the White House's desire for maximum flexibility bumped up against the conviction of many lawmakers that the administration was not moving vigorously enough in pursuit of what was, after all, the shared goal of better relations with India.

The growing influence of the India caucus has been, at best, a mixed blessing for the executive branch. Many Clinton administration officials

concluded that the difficulties created by the caucus's pro-India orientation outweighed whatever advantages accrued from the existence of a bloc of members with a ready interest in the region. Privately, State Department officers speak of the caucus more often as an obstacle to be circumvented than an ally to be consulted. Particularly when the executive branch was pushing for sanctions relief for Pakistan—and until the 1998 Glenn amendment sanctions, the administration's activities had focused largely on easing restrictions on Islamabad—the State Department looked for ways to get the Senate to take the lead. If the Senate could be persuaded to adopt desired legislation, the issue could be decided in a conference committee of the two houses, and the White House could thereby avoid a floor fight in the House, where the caucus was most effective in delivering votes. On at least three occasions in recent years, the Clinton administration successfully followed this tactic.

An Uncertain Future

The potential for conflict between the two branches remains, particularly as executive branch concerns about nonproliferation bump up against the desire of many members of Congress to foster close ties between the United States and India. In March 2000, at a moment when both Congress and the Clinton administration were keen to improve U.S.-Indo ties, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright cautioned that, until there is significant progress in narrowing nonproliferation differences with India, it would remain impossible to "realize fully the vast potential" of the bilateral relationship. Lest anyone miss her point, she baldly stated that proliferation remained "our number one security concern."[13] Not even Clinton's triumphal visit to India and Vajpayee's return visit to Washington last year have altered the reality that nonproliferation differences are likely to place substantial constraints on the ability of President George W. Bush to create a true strategic partnership with New Delhi.

During last year's presidential campaign, Bush had little to say about South Asia, and what he did say seemed calculated more to win support from the Indian American community than to raise concerns about India's nuclear weapons program. Bush and many of his senior advisers, moreover, are known to harbor a certain skepticism toward the global nonproliferation regime. Nonetheless, the Bush administration will probably find considerable utility in maintaining existing international nonproliferation norms—as a global standard of behavior, as a means of encouraging Indian and Pakistani restraint, and as a way to avoid having nonproliferation become merely a bilateral dispute between the United States and nuclear aspirants.

Congress does not place the same priority on nonproliferation issues in the subcontinent. Discussion of enrichment technologies, export controls, and maintaining the international nonproliferation regime has been noticeably absent from recent Hill debates about Washington's India policy. The focus has shifted instead to trade, shared democratic values, and the desirability of a reliable partner in case relations with China sour. "We need to put this sanctions business behind us," Senator Pat Roberts (R-Kan.) has argued, "and get on with building relationships and doing business."[14]

It is unlikely that Bush will quarrel with this view, and the new president will probably lift the remaining Glenn amendment sanctions on India. Such a move would win widespread congressional support on both sides of the aisle but would not represent a significant departure from the trend of the past two-and-a-half years.

Don't expect Congress to fill a South Asia policy vacuum if Bush doesn't lead.

Managing the U.S.-Indo relationship will not be among the priority items on the new president's foreign policy agenda; there are simply too many actual or potential crises demanding his attention. Beyond the largely symbolic step of removing the Glenn amendment sanctions, Bush is unlikely to give sustained thought to South Asia in the early months of the new administration, unless alarming developments in the region make such neglect untenable. In all probability, those hoping for dramatic departures in U.S. policy will be disappointed by what they will view as a tepid approach—or worse yet, indifference—from Bush and his team.

Yet one should not expect Congress to fill the ensuing South Asia policy vacuum. When it comes to foreign policy, the U.S. Congress is better at obstructing executive branch desires than at fashioning policy of its own. When the Congress does play a constructive role, it is almost always on the margins of policy; modern U.S. political history does not offer a single example where Congress has successfully launched a major foreign policy initiative in the face of executive opposition, nor should New Delhi look for one now.

Overall, the growing consensus in Washington favors improved U.S.-Indo ties. Capitol Hill, both reflecting and reinforcing this new sympathy toward India, has witnessed in recent years an extraordinary explosion of interest in New Delhi, albeit one driven more by domestic political considerations than by a strategic conception of the United States', or India's, role in the world. Although sharing this vision of an Indo-U.S. *entente cordiale*, the Bush administration nonetheless possesses a set of responsibilities and policy priorities

that will at times place it at odds with the Congress. In any contest of this nature, political and constitutional realities usually give the executive branch the upper hand, suggesting that U.S.-Indo ties will almost certainly fail to evolve as fully or as quickly as India's new friends on the Hill might wish.

Notes

1. Sec. 102(b) of the Arms Export Control Act.
2. Robert M. Hathaway, "Confrontation and Retreat: The U.S. Congress and the South Asian Nuclear Tests," *Arms Control Today* 30 (January/February 2000): 9–10.
3. Sharon M. Lee, "Asian Americans: Diverse and Growing," *Population Bulletin* 53 (June 1998); Karen Isaksen Leonard, *The South Asian Americans* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1997); Sanjeev Khagram, Manish Desai, and Jason Varughese, "Seen, Rich, but Unheard?: The Politics of Asian Indians in the United States," in Gordon H. Chang, ed., *Asian Americans and Politics: Perspectives, Experiences, Prospects* (Washington: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001).
4. Eliza Newlin Carney, "Another Kind of Arms Race," *National Journal*, June 6, 1998, 1306; Miles A. Pomper, "Indian-Americans' Numbers, Affluence Are Translating into Political Power," *Congressional Quarterly*, March 18, 2000, 580.
5. Senator Sam Brownback, interview with author, August 3, 1999.
6. *India Abroad*, June 26, 1998; Dan Burton et al, letter to President Clinton, June 20, 2000.
7. Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, interview with author, August 3, 1999.
8. Senator Sam Brownback, address to the U.S.-India Business Council, June 16, 1999.
9. *India Abroad*, April 23, 1999.
10. Representative Gary L. Ackerman, speech before the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, April 3, 1999.
11. The amendment would have cut the development assistance account by $24 million, the exact amount the administration had targeted for India. Republicans supported the amendment 127-35; Democrats voted against it 92-164. The provision was dropped during the House-Senate conference committee.
12. *Congressional Record*, 106th Cong., 1st sess., 1999, p. H6825.
13. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, remarks to the Asia Society, Washington, D.C., March 14, 2000.
14. *India Abroad*, December 3, 1999.