

Peace, Prosperity, Planet, People

A New Chapter in US–India Relations

AMBASSADOR ERIC GARCETTI

Good afternoon. It's great to be here with you today.

I'd like to thank IIT Director Professor Rangan Bannerjee and Dean of International Relations Professor James Gomes for hosting us here today at an institution which so embodies our hopes for future generations.

I'd also like to express my appreciation to the Asia Society Policy Institute, and the esteemed Dr. C Raja Mohan, for co-organizing this event.

I just returned to India yesterday from the United States, where I had the honor to participate in the official state visit of Prime Minister Modi to the United States and was privileged to witness something truly remarkable.

I'd like to tell you what I saw.

I saw an incredible celebration of the bond between the world's two great democracies. As President Biden so clearly heralded, I saw a celebration of the "defining partnership of this century."

I saw an unequivocal recognition, as Prime Minister Modi so eloquently said, that "the scope of our cooperation is endless, and the chemistry of our relations is effortless."

I saw the personal rapport between President Biden and Prime Minister Modi.

I saw the power of transformative friendship.

In sum, I saw history being made and our future framed.

There can be high expectations when US and Indian leaders come face to face. A visit can be full of good intentions and generate plenty of warm feelings, but will it yield concrete results that actually help our peoples and advance our relationship?

For this visit, the answer is a resounding "yes." Not only was there natural friendship and real partnership, I was also struck by the depth and breadth of the truly important initiatives announced, demonstrating once again how India and the United States are collaborating on nearly every human endeavor. The projects we're initiating will change the world.

The text was delivered as a speech at the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi (IIT Delhi), New Delhi, 28 June 2023.

The celebration was real. And from the White House to the Capitol, the American government, across party lines, congressional houses, and the different branches of government all brought a fantastic celebration.

From the welcome-filled with pomp and American tradition, to the Indian--inspired menus that incorporated millet touches—

From the thoughtful gifts to PM Modi's stirring speech before Congress—

From the groundswell of pride among Indian-Americans who saw that their place in the US-India story was so appreciated, to the graciousness of the Prime Minister and the Indian delegation—

It was all so very memorable.

One of my favorite images was seeing Anchal Sharma, one of IIT Delhi's own students and currently a Fulbright scholar at MIT—share the stage with the Prime Minister and First Lady Jill Biden. Anchal is drawing on her superb Indian and US educational opportunities to advance her work in assistive technology, which in turn will benefit so many. Anchal is an inspiration, and a testament to what's possible when the US and India come together: A future of boundless possibility. In Prime Minister Modi's words, a future where “the potential of our synergies is limitless.”

After such an amazing, auspicious, hope filled week, and as I return now to India to help lead our work together, I'm propelled by a fundamental realization. It's the recognition that translating our incredible *potential* together into an incredible *reality* comes down to how much confidence our countries have in each other, and in our shared vision.

That's why I'd like to underscore my remarks today with a simple Hindi phrase: *Sapne sakar karna*.

Sapne sakar karna. Making dreams into reality.

I'm a big fan of that idea. As many here may know, I'm from California. And California is a place where people dream big and big dreams come to life.

From the Hollywood director who transformed a story of cross-cultural discovery set across the stars into *Avatar*, the highest-grossing movie of all time; to Astrolab, the California startup company that reimaged all-terrain travel to help astronauts move across the surface of the moon; to the city of Los Angeles—my hometown—which will soon realize its dream of uniting the world through sports when the city hosts for a third time the Olympic Games, and for the first time the Paralympic Games, in 2028.

Globally, just like Los Angeles, the United States has shown time and again that through imagination, great spirit and hard work, dreams can come true.

But I don't need to convince anyone here of this. India is also a place where dreams become reality every day.

After all, in India a young boy selling tea grew up to lead his country on the global stage.

In India, a Santali teacher rose to become President of her country.

Today, India is improving lives and pulling people out of poverty through its transformative technology.

Our countries have so much in common because the Indian dream and the American dream are two sides of the same coin— we share the same vision. Our people want to achieve success for our communities and our families. We embrace possibility, new opportunities, new knowledge, and the chance to make a difference. We want to leave the world better-off and more secure than we found it—not just for ourselves and our own countries, but for everyone.

Our connection is very personal, based on affinity and friendship. We're linked by a diaspora community more than four-million strong. Through educational and business connections, and an appreciation for each other's cultures, our friendship grows along with our shared experience and shared ambitions.

We can see the results of this friendship in every aspect of our relationship. I'd like to share a few statistics that reflect just how close we are:

- Last year, one out of every five US student visas issued worldwide went to an Indian student, and over 200,000 Indians are studying in the United States.
- The United States is India's largest trading partner, with more than \$191 billion dollars in two-way trade.
- India conducts more military exercises with the United States than it does with any other country.
- More than 450 Indian nationals work at the US National Institutes of Health intramural laboratories—the highest number of biomedical scientists from any Asian country currently at NIH.
- In the United States, more than 20 elected and appointed government officials proudly claim Indian heritage. Of course, this includes our Vice President, Kamala Harris.
- Indian-origin CEOs head many of the United States' largest and most iconic companies, such as Alphabet/Google, Microsoft, Starbucks, and Adobe. In fact, more than 10 percent of Fortune 500 company CEOs are of Indian ancestry.
- Within the past six months, five members of the US Cabinet—President Biden's closest government advisors—visited India to meet with their counterparts, and more visits are planned.

The Prime Minister's official state visit crystallized that our partnership is accelerating at breathtaking speed and is having undeniable impact.

This raises an interesting challenge. In so many areas, we're cooperating more closely than some ever imagined we could. So, what do we do when our partnership's achievement outstrips our earlier expectations?

Of course, this is a good challenge to have. And, luckily, there's a simple answer.

We reframe our vision. We reset the moment. We dream an even more ambitious reality. And then we make it real.

In Hollywood—the land of the sequel—the most crucial question is always “what happens next?”

So today, distinguished guests and colleagues, that's my question to you: When it comes to the US and India, what happens next?

How do we frame a new vision, one that recognizes past achievements and builds on our longstanding values to create a better future?

How do we prioritize new starts, and invest in new opportunities?

How will we accommodate difference, even as our friendship becomes closer?

For us to prosper further, how do we transform old patterns and systems, even cynicism, to new awareness, and swap out worn stereotypes for more enlightened understanding and more accelerated action?

After all, the world isn't the same place it was—if these past three years have shown us anything, it's that our world can change overnight. And while we've made it through to the other side of the pandemic, we are painfully aware of our global vulnerability.

Today, global supply chains feel more brittle; our security and national borders can't be taken for granted, our planet cries out for relief, and fundamental values—democracy, freedom, and rule of law—feel under attack.

So how can the United States and India translate our dreams into a more peaceful, secure, and prosperous future for all our peoples?

I have a few ideas, based on one fundamental fact: the United States and India are better off, and we produce better results, when we work together.

... for Peace.

... for Prosperity

... for the Planet.

And ultimately, for People: the People of India, the People of the United States ... and for the peoples of the whole world.

Let's talk about ensuring the peace.

When Prime Minister Modi said that “today's era is not an era of war,” it caught the ears of the entire world.

What a powerful idea. What a *necessary* idea. And President Biden has spoken about this moment being “an inflection point.”

Of course, lasting peace isn’t something that just happens; it has to be carefully built and nurtured.

Luckily, the United States and India have the power to set an example and build a more peaceful world, in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

A key component of peace is protection. As we’ve unfortunately seen over the past three years, we live in a world in which countries ignore sovereign borders, advancing their claims through violence and destruction.

This is not the world we want. This is not the world we need.

Together, India and the United States of America can build a bulwark against this “might makes right” mentality. Working together, the world’s two largest democracies can bolster the security, stability, and prosperity of the entire world.

Our countries already do so much together to ensure the peace.

Our troops conduct joint training and operations from the mountains of Alaska to the Red Sea.

Our forces are friends, thanks to our strong tradition of exchanges at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels.

Our countries’ defense industries are increasingly connected. In fact, components made here in India already keep US Apache helicopters and C-130 transport aircraft in the sky.

And soon, we’ll see advanced jet engines made here in India as well.

So, what happens next?

During their discussions last week in Washington D.C., our leaders pledged to accelerate our momentum through building together and working together.

Let’s start with building together. This is important. When the US and India work together to coproduce military equipment, we create a state-of-the-art system at a sustainable cost and with resilient supply chains for India, the United States, and our partners.

The announcements made during Prime Minister Modi’s official state visit set a marker and highlighted incredible potential.

Through the co-production work that is already happening in airframes and engineering, and the planned work in aeroengines, artillery, and ground vehicles, to name just a few, we are poised to further deepen co-production and tackle new opportunities—some that we can’t even imagine today.

Now let’s talk about working together.

Our partnership is anchored in the common values we cherish—freedom; respect for sovereignty and for all humankind. In turn, our partnership can anchor the region and deliver benefits on a massive scale.

I hope soon we'll see the United States and India working together across the Pacific and into the Atlantic, from Central Asia to Southern Africa.

We can stand together against those who would upend the common good for their own benefit.

We can stand together for choice, resisting coercion.

We can stand together as a force for stability to avert regional and global crises.

We can deploy our ships together in the Pacific and Indian oceans, and even beyond, to ensure maritime security.

We can employ our air forces across the Indo-Pacific region to ensure freedom of the skies and the seas, and to jointly respond to humanitarian crises from the Sahara to the Pacific Islands.

We can coordinate our land-force exercises across regions to bolster the sovereign defense of all countries who want to work with us. These are opportunities fully within our control as Major Defense Partners.

We have so much momentum to build from. Last week we saw a bipartisan effort to introduce legislation in both chambers of US Congress to fast-track our engagement and expand our security cooperation.

Like any other skill, it takes practice and trust. We need to institutionalize trust by increasing our human interaction, communication, and interoperability between our forces. And as we master interoperability on the land, sea, and air, we can advance our partnership in new frontiers, including outer space and cyberspace.

Our bold vision for building together and working together is already being realized.

Not just peace, the absence of war, but the active promotion of freedom “no sweeter word . . . no nobler goal . . . no higher aspiration,” than freedom. May we remind ourselves that we come together for more than preserving peace, but to work towards freedom.

If peace is the predicate, then prosperity is the purpose of our work. What lifts up our people is not just our efforts to keep them free from war, but also to keep them free from want, as we work better together, to build prosperity for all, including the most vulnerable.

Our countries have a long history of working miracles through economic empowerment. Now the time has come to engage on critical emerging technology to set the stage for the miracles of tomorrow.

Last year in Tokyo, President Biden and Prime Minister Modi framed an ambitious vision called the initiative for Critical and Emerging Technology—iCET for short.

They envisioned a US–India technology partnership that would connect us; that would protect us; and that would detect unseen threats that could do us harm—from the tiniest bacteria to massive cyberspace intrusions.

They imagined working together as democracies to build an open, accessible, and secure technology ecosystem for collaboration and innovation on tomorrow’s leading technology: space, quantum computing, artificial intelligence, and advanced wireless communications.

Last week, our leaders took this nascent vision and turbo-charged it.

As they announced, we’re working towards human spaceflight cooperation, as partners under the Artemis Accords.

In the coming months and years, we’ll see NASA and ISRO astronauts and scientists working, training, and exploring side-by side, honing our understanding of space and of the planet we call home.

We’re deepening private sector cooperation on space and harmonizing our regulatory and licensing standards.

Our long partnership in public health continues to break new ground. We’re using artificial intelligence to detect and treat cancer and deploying technologies to expand medical care access for more people.

Thanks to the great work of Dr. Pooja Mukul—who is with us here today—our countries’ private sector engineers are partnering to provide mobility to individuals across the world who are most in need through prosthetic knee replacements that cost less than one hundred US dollars.

Dr. Mukul’s work also stands as a clear example of the invaluable contributions that women working in STEM professions make to the prosperity of both our peoples. As we expand workforce participation and empower women across all sectors, we’ll unleash the boundless potential of our economies.

And there’s so much more to come.

As with all technology, true power comes from interoperability. Luckily, our shared experiences give the United States and India a tremendous base of interoperability to work from. As democracies, we believe that the design and use of technology should be informed by democratic values and respect for human rights.

Unfortunately, not everyone shares that vision. There are those who would prefer to use technology as an authoritarian weapon, to intimidate their neighbors and control their own citizens.

That’s why we’re diversifying and deepening our supply chains with trusted partners and reducing dependencies that put our peoples at risk.

In March, Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo and Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal launched a partnership to make our semiconductor supply chains more resilient.

We saw the first fruits of these efforts last week, when Micron, Applied Materials, and LAM Research announced agreements to collaborate with India on semiconductors.

And just a few weeks ago, our leaders convened the inaugural meeting of the India-US Strategic Trade Dialogue, which focused on ways to facilitate access and trade in critical technologies, while maintaining necessary controls to prevent their misuse.

The Strategic Trade Dialogue is a crucial part of our technology vision, laying a secure foundation for us to collaborate and innovate on space, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, and more.

On the US side, there's a revolutionary transition underway, to ease India's access to these critical technologies.

And, as founding members of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity—or IPEF—we can also work as partners to increase the prosperity and interoperability of the entire region.

IPEF connects the United States and India with twelve other partners across East and Southeast Asia to promote resiliency and economic opportunity.

Working together with our IPEF partners, the United States and India can increase the prosperity of our own people and create opportunities for the entire world.

And, together with Australia and Japan, our countries act together as a Quad to address the most pressing challenges across the Indo-Pacific region, from healthcare to maritime awareness to cybersecurity.

Last week, we put down our trade swords and forged them into plowshares, reducing tariffs on US agricultural products like almonds and apples while providing fewer barriers to Indian steel products.

As we begin to put old trade fights into the rear-view mirror, it is time for us to raise our ambitions in the coming months to tear down bureaucratic, administrative, and legislative hurdles and imagine future agreements that make the US–India economic relationship one of the most frictionless in the world.

But as we raise the standard of living in the US and so dramatically here in India, we face a threat to that prosperity, not only in our countries, but across the globe. This threat demands an equally bold agenda, so that:

Together, we can do better for the planet.

It's difficult to overstate the urgency of the challenge presented by climate change.

From floods to fires to typhoons and monsoons, extreme weather events cause incalculable damage to critical infrastructure that billions of people across the world use daily to access power, food, water, healthcare, and human connection.

Climate change undermines our security and causes serious economic disruptions—costing the global economy more than USD 2.2 trillion dollars in the last two years alone.

And climate change also takes lives, including the dozens of people who die during increasingly common and severe heat waves.

Without urgent action, climate change could push another 100 million people into poverty by 2030.

That's not the future we want.

As a global community, we need to cut our emissions of harmful gases. For the long-term health of the planet, this is an essential step.

Cities, as well as nations, can lead. As Mayor of Los Angeles—one of the founding cities of the Urban20—or U20—movement I joined with mayors from other G20 cities to set a global urban agenda, a movement I launched on-stage in Glasgow, speaking just after Prime Minister Modi.

Now, as Ambassador, I am so excited that India is hosting the sixth U20 cycle this year as part of its G20 presidency.

The G20 theme of “One Earth, One Family, One Future” recognizes how local action, partnered with global leadership, can drive lasting, positive change.

It's our city, town, and village residents, after all, who experience our economies at the ground level, as they start new businesses; search for new jobs; spend time stuck in traffic; and strive for clean air, water, and housing for their families.

Our citizens need the health and infrastructure investments they deserve. Those of you in Delhi, and India's other major cities, well appreciate this urgency. So how do we put this intention into action?

We must strive for integration—linking economic growth and environmental sustainability, urban density and green space, and diversity and social harmony.

Now is the time to harness technology to make our environmental agenda a reality. We must work better together to save our planet.

I'm happy to say our countries collaborate closely in this space, through our efforts in the India-led Solar Alliance, for example, and through US government support for groundbreaking companies like First Solar, in Tamil Nadu.

Last week, our leaders emphasized our shared vision to rapidly deploy clean energy at scale and highlighted our plans to accelerate cooperation in green hydrogen, offshore and onshore wind, and other emerging technologies. They underscored exploration to increase our minerals security cooperation to ensure we have the means and resources to advance our clean energy goals.

Our private industries are also working closely together.

As we speak, Boeing is working with the Indian Institute of Petroleum to develop sustainable aviation fuels from Indian feedstock.

As the climate crisis intensifies, we'll also need to engage the global community collectively.

India has led the way by forming the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. This year, the United States is joining India as co-chair.

Together, we're strengthening early warning systems for climate hazards, including access to real-time data; helping to take early action; and strengthening the capacity of institutions, communities, and governments to proactively address risk to reduce exposure and vulnerability to natural hazards.

Next, we need to come together to help leaders at the subnational level, in Indian states and local communities, who can lead and learn together with US and other global regions and cities how to best implement greener buildings, transportation networks, and electricity grids.

Together, we can and must adapt and build our resilience to safeguard our people, livelihoods, and infrastructure.

A safer, more prosperous, healthier planet are all the foundation of our work so our peoples can realize their fullest potential and dignity.

The US–India partnership is ultimately about personal relationships and building those very personal bridges that connect our societies.

When I came to India for the first time as a teenager—when I saw firsthand how connected we are to each other, despite differences in language, wealth, social status, and geography, it changed my life forever.

I've come back to this country every decade since then. I studied Hindi and learned the history and the cultures of the region.

I may not be Indian, but India is a big part of me and has helped shape who I am today.

I wonder: how many people in this room have had a similar connection to the United States through education, family, food, or American culture?

I'd guess quite a few.

Now multiply those feelings by four million—one for each member of the Indian American diaspora currently living in the United States.

That's the power of our people-to-people connection. It drives everything else we do.

My goal as Ambassador is to make these personal ties even stronger; to give as many people as possible, in both countries, the opportunity to have the same life-changing experience that I did. I see so many students in this room today. I am inspired by your dedication, and I want you to have every opportunity to realize your full potential.

Because the Indian diaspora in the United States is so strong and vibrant, Indians generally know the United States better than Americans know India.

And I think Americans are missing out. I'd also love to bring more Americans to India, to work, study, and visit.

When our countries' leaders announced the expansion of scholarships to encourage American students to come study in India, including under our joint Fulbright-Nehru Education Exchange Foundation, it laid a clear marker.

The US Department of State is also working with Indian academic institutions to develop compelling study-abroad programs with US colleges and universities.

We've established a new Joint Task Force linking the Association of American Universities and leading Indian institutions to expand research and university partnerships. We're working with the Government of India to help make it easier for US universities to expand their presence here in India, to create joint degree programs and foster joint research programs in STEM fields as well as upskilling opportunities through community colleges.

We are also thrilled that so many Indians want to experience the United States directly, to study, conduct business, see family and friends, and enjoy the many wonders of the United States. We would also like to see the numbers of Indians visiting the US grow.

It takes a lot of work and coordination to respond to the extraordinary interest in the US from India and we are striving to make the process of traveling to the US as efficient as possible.

Which brings us to visas—a popular topic, I know.

We want to eliminate the barriers that prevent qualified travelers from experiencing the United States. One way we get there is by expanding our operations.

We're already doing this. We're currently processing more visas, faster, than the US Mission in India ever has before. We set a goal for ourselves to process at least a million visas in 2023, and we're already more than halfway towards reaching that goal.

Our investments have brought real results, and we've seen wait times for first-time tourist visa interviews fall by more than 50 percent.

In the coming months, we'll continue to invest in expanding our visa operations and broadening our team. We'll find innovative solutions to streamline the visa process, such as reducing the need for in-person interviews, which allows consular teams around the world to assist in processing visas for the growing number of Indian travelers.

We are committed to ensuring that a whole new generation of Indian adventurers, entrepreneurs, and scholars can experience America.

And as was announced last week, in the coming years we'll see two new US consulates—in Bengaluru and Ahmedabad—added to the four already in India to further foster understanding and connection.

Of course, investing in people also means standing up for the rights of everyone, especially the marginalized and most vulnerable. The United States will continue to engage with Indians across the country, from all walks of life. India is a country of tremendous diversity, with different faiths, heritages, and experiences, and we celebrate this deeply syncretic culture that makes India so unique.

We will continue to engage on human rights issues, as we have always done, and as we do in all countries around the world.

This is an area that I approach with great humility—the United States continues to learn through hard experience how important it is to be honest about our challenges and confront them head on. As Mahatma Gandhi phrased it so well, “our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and test of our civilization.”

As Vice President Harris said last week, reflecting on the lessons her grandfather, who helped fight for India’s independence taught her, we must not only have democracy, but work to defend democracy. In America, we’re still not perfect, and the American experiment continues alongside the American dream.

I think the Indian dream is equally potent and challenging. But in the face of our domestic and international challenges, the idea of India and the United States dreaming and succeeding together are an unbeatable combination.

As we work together to invest in peace, invest in prosperity, and invest in our planet, to the benefit of our peoples, we’ll unlock the full potential of the US–India relationship.

Together, our countries can bring transformative solutions to some of our greatest challenges. Together, we can be a partnership for true good in the world. That’s my dream.

Today, and in the weeks and months ahead, I want to hear about your dreams for the US–India partnership, and how we can realize those dreams together.

Sapne sakar karna. 🌟

Ambassador Eric Garcetti

Eric Garcetti was designated as the US ambassador to India 15 March 2023. He previously served as the mayor of Los Angeles from 2013 to 2022. Garcetti, a former member of the Los Angeles City Council, was President of the Council from 2006 to 2012. He earned his BA and MA from Columbia University. He attended Oxford and the London School of Economics as a Rhodes Scholar and taught at Occidental College and the University of Southern California. He was a reserve officer in the US Navy for 12 years.

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