

Speech by Foreign Secretary at the Delhi Policy Group Seminar with MIT on Asian Security Challenges

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**Ambassador Bajpai,
Programme Director Radha Kumar,
Distinguished participants,**

It is a pleasure to be invited to make the closing address at this Delhi Policy Group Conference organized in association with the Centre for International Studies (CIS) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on 'Asian Security Challenges.' This is indeed a timely conference and I compliment the organizers for choosing a sufficiently topical theme to generate discussion and bring forth new ideas. Such a debate is necessary, all the more amongst analysts from the two key countries that can contribute in a substantial way to the further evolution of Asian Security in the coming decades.

2. Seen from the perspective of persistent and often violent conflicts of the last century, the current international situation is quite unique. Globalization has brought about a new imperative of global inter-dependence where major powers and their economies are integrated as never before. Unlike the Cold War period, now every major economy is dependent on economic and political engagement with the outside world for its continued development and prosperity. The absence of overt conflict has however not reduced anxieties about the future direction of international peace and security. For a number of reasons, these anxieties are quite pronounced in Asia. That is a paradox for Asia. It is today enjoying unprecedented economic growth and rising prosperity which it has not enjoyed for over three hundred years.

3. Asia is a continent coming into its own. It is witnessing the simultaneous rise of several major powers, riding the crest of economic, technological and demographic changes that are far from running their course. Recent studies predict that by 2030 Asia will account for one third of global GDP, with equal share for US and EU. Within Asia, economic growth in China, India, ASEAN and ROK has continued despite the economic downturn in several OECD countries. Asian economies, with their young and talented work force are increasingly seen as invaluable for sustaining global economic growth. The current trends of integration within Asia and integration of Asia with the global economy will continue.

4. Asian security is thus not only in the interests of Asian states but also contributes to global economic growth and security. The Asian security terrain is unlike that of Europe, given its essential strategic heterogeneity and therefore its inherent disposition towards multi-polarity, making it difficult for any one power to impose its will on the entire region. Call it global strategy or by any other name, managing the security challenges of an increasing inter-dependent world requires security concepts and institutions vastly different from those of past decades. Global security will increasingly be impacted by Asian perspectives and India's perspectives on security issues are of course a significant part of this Asian narrative.

5. The factors that shape India's perspectives on security issues

are related to its national priorities as well as the evolving regional and global situations. Foremost amongst our national priorities is to secure an enabling environment to facilitate India's growth and development as a major advanced economy capable of meeting the development aspirations of over a billion people. The overriding challenge is sustaining growth rates of 8-10% over the next two decades for India to abolish mass poverty. This means not just peace and stability in our immediate neighbourhood but an enabling international environment that provides a sustained and predictable basis for India's engagement with the international community for trade, natural resources, capital and energy flows and technology. This requires a proactive but balanced engagement at multiple levels, bilateral, regional as well as globally with all the major powers. As a developing country, India has a vested interest in a free and law governed global trading and financial system just as it has in a stable, multilateral international security

order. A globalizing world demands a seamless integration of economic, political and strategic dimensions of national security, which we believe, must be pursued within the framework of regional and global interdependence.

6. India's troubled neighbourhood is the cross section of several trends that are of concern to Asian as well as global security. The epicenter of global terrorism is located in our neighbourhood. The horrendous attacks on the Indian Embassy in Kabul and the Mumbai attacks two years ago demonstrated the barbaric forms that terrorism can take. There are terror groups, some that even enjoy the patronage of elements of state structures, that target India from across our borders. These groups are developing transnational linkages, in terms of recruitment, training, planning and financing of specific attacks. There is increasing evidence that Al-Qaeda, the LeT and the Taliban are conducting coordinated and in fact operationally fused terror attacks. Some countries presume that they can pursue terrorism as an instrument of state policy without risks to themselves or to their standing in the international community. This is a flawed and self-defeating presumption as the war on terrorism cannot be selective. We have always maintained that a stable and prosperous Pakistan is in India's interest. Pakistan must turn away from using terror-induced coercion as an instrument of policy against India. The roll back and elimination of the terror infrastructure in Pakistan can go a long way in securing stability and security not just in South Asia, but more widely across Asia and indeed the globe.

7. While India has faced the brunt of cross border terrorism, it is clear that rolling back terrorism cannot succeed by national efforts alone but will require sustained international cooperation on an unprecedented scale. India has sponsored at the UN a draft Comprehensive Convention on Combating Terrorism to provide a legal basis for combating terrorism globally as well as for holding to account those countries which allow their territories to be used for terror attacks on others.

8. There is growing recognition that the situation in Afghanistan cannot be stabilized unless the support and sustenance that terror groups receive from beyond Afghanistan's borders are eliminated. The Afghan people should be allowed to rebuild their land in conditions of peace and security, free from interference from their neighbors. The Afghan people have time and again proven that they would like to be arbiters of their own destiny and would not like to be dictated to by those seeking to impose their own narrow strategic calculations. Any attempts to seek so called 'strategic depth' would flounder against the reality of the indomitable sense of Afghan independence and nationalism. India has a vested interest in the success of the international community's efforts in pushing back the forces of fanaticism, violence and terror in Afghanistan and has contributed in substantial measure for the achievement of these objectives. Asian security cannot be ensured unless safe heavens and sanctuaries for terrorism and violent extremism are eliminated from Afghanistan and Pakistan.

9. China's rise is a fact of global significance and presents both challenges as well as opportunities. The nature of China's rise will be watched closely. As the world's second largest economy, China is as dependent on external resources as it is on foreign markets. Its role as a responsible stakeholder in the global economic structures is thus a matter of rational necessity. Asian states would judge China's 'peaceful rise' not so much by the intentions of its leadership as by their actions. China is our largest neighbour. As two major Asian powers, there is space for both China and India to play their legitimate role in fostering Asian security. There will be both competition and cooperation but a stable dynamic equilibrium can be maintained within the larger matrix of dialogue and diplomacy. But China has to demonstrate sensitivity to India's core interests. On global issues, India and China have several areas where cooperation has been possible - ranging from WTO trade matters, environment and energy security.

10. The challenges posed to a sustainable Asian security order by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction cannot be overstated. Terrorists and non-state actors gaining access to WMD could have catastrophic consequences. Clandestine proliferation in our neighbourhood has had a corrosive effect on the global non-proliferation regime. One US analyst has stated that Pakistan has the fastest growing nuclear arsenal in the world. The security situation on the Korean Peninsula is fraught with danger of escalation. Iran has the right to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes but these should be exercised consistent with its international obligations along with efforts to restore international confidence in the peaceful nature of its nuclear programme. China has a fairly advanced nuclear and missile modernization programme with the potential to alter the military balance in the Asia-Pacific region. BMD programmes are also becoming more common. Military expenditures are on the rise in Asia as a whole and in a number of countries, the military establishments are becoming ever more powerful.

11. India has been a steadfast supporter of global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament as we believe that our national security as well as global security can be enhanced through the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. In

1988, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi put forward a comprehensive Action Plan for achieving nuclear disarmament and ushering in a non-violent world order. India remains committed to its objectives. India has a no-first use policy and has supported various measures for reducing nuclear dangers, including at the first Nuclear Security Summit held in Washington in April last year. There is need for a step by step process based on meaningful dialogue among all states possessing nuclear weapons to build trust and confidence and work on an agreed multilateral framework for achieving global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament. India has supported the negotiation of a verifiable FMCT in the CD as a measure to strengthen non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects and we share the disappointment of the international community at the delay in the commencement of negotiations, largely on account of the forthright opposition of one country.

12. While we redouble our efforts to address challenges of WMD proliferation, we must also be aware of other emerging security challenges, which may erode security of the 'Global Commons' that cover outer-space, cyber space and global transport and communication networks. Rapid technological developments, if left unregulated, have the potential of leading to the weaponization of outer-space. The development of anti-Satellite technologies poses considerable risks. Our objective should be the negotiation of legally binding instruments that enhance security in space and for all space users. Cyber security poses similar challenges. International systems for ensuring cyber security have not kept pace with the growing threats. If there are no internationally accepted principles and regulations for protecting cyber assets, states may fall back on individual national measures based on technologies that favour the offense, putting global integration at considerable risk.

13. The imperatives of globalization require a stable maritime security system, given the demands of trade and commerce and energy flows- 90 % of global commerce by goods and 65 % of world energy supplies in terms of oil are carried by sea. It is not widely known that 90% of internet traffic is carried by cables on the seabed, again an indication of how global inter-connectivity is linked to maritime security. Emerging powers in Asia and beyond, all consider maritime security as essential to their vital interests. Accretion in naval forces is the most prominent feature of the current arms build-up, especially in the Asian region. Non-state threats to maritime security are also on the rise from piracy and smuggling, including in proliferation of sensitive items. Economic growth and climate have also brought focus on issues such as finite water resources and its impact on food security. Sharing of river waters is an issue that will engage Asian countries ever more in the coming years. None of these issues lend themselves to easy or unilateral solutions. Maritime security can be enhanced by transparency, dialogue and cooperation to ensure confidence that no major power would seek to use force to settle territorial claims or even to pressurise littoral states. There is need to reaffirm importance of unimpeded access to the seas for commerce and freedom of navigation in accordance with the universally accepted principles of international law.

14. India has favoured consultation and cooperation among all the littoral navies as well as navies of countries which use the seaways to address the multifarious threats from the sea as part of an architecture of maritime security based on the twin principles of shared security and shared prosperity. India is well poised to play a leadership role in this regard. Maritime security is an important dimension of India's bilateral relations with all Indian Ocean Littoral states as well with almost all regional bodies that are either based in or border the Indian Ocean region- ranging from SAARC, BIMSTEC, ARF, ASEAN, GCC, SADC to the AU. India's 'soft power' gives it considerable advantages that few other countries can match in this region in terms of acceptance of India's credentials and recognition of the vital contribution that we can make for stability and prosperity of the entire region. Our navy has emerged as a versatile and flexible diplomatic instrument to mark India's presence in the region. India has undertaken naval exercises with all the major navies of the world. The prompt assistance provided by the Indian navy in the aftermath of the Tsunami demonstrated our capabilities for providing timely disaster relief and humanitarian assistance. The Indian Ocean Symposium (IONS) initiative, launched by Indian Navy has been welcomed as a forward looking framework for constructive engagement among the navies of the region. Under the ARF, India has contributed to discussions on maritime security. India has also contributed to regional efforts for safe navigation in the Malacca straits.

15. The Asian security architecture is evolving rapidly, with a multiplicity of forums but with converging agendas. The ASEAN countries have played a central role in ARF as well as the first ADMM Plus meeting at the level of defence ministers which took place in Hanoi in October last year, with the participation of all major Asian powers as well as powers which have direct interests in Asia. This process took a further step with US and Russian participation in the 5th East Asia Summit which took place in Hanoi on 30 October. India is seen as an indispensable partner given our strong bilateral relations with all major Asian countries. As a net contributor of security, India's role is widely welcomed. We are deepening our economic engagement with ASEAN states and security cooperation engagement

within ARF and ADMM Plus frameworks. We are poised to play our legitimate role in the EAS summit framework. The trilateral India, Russia, China framework can also make a contribution to Asian security perspectives. In every forum, India's voice is heard and respected. The UNSC is widely recognized as being more representative of the realities of the last century rather than that of the current one, especially that of 21st century Asia. India has a valid and legitimate claim to be a permanent member of the Security Council. The recent economic and financial crisis has catalysed the emergence of the G-20, in which India is an active participant.

16. The United States has played an active role in Asia for more than a century. It is a world power with indisputable economic, trade, financial and military influence. The Joint Statement issued during President Obama's visit to India in November last year spelt out the shared vision of both countries for peace, stability and prosperity in Asia, the India Ocean region and the Pacific regions. This is an important aspect of the global strategic partnership between India and the United States in the 21st century. While India and the United States would pursue their national interests in Asia, there is considerable commonality in perspectives and approaches. The strategic communities in both countries have paid considerable attention to analysing the contours of the current geo-political changes under way in Asia. Some give an optimistic assessment - that Asia will pull itself together, continue its present economic growth rates, and avoid inter-state conflict while effectively addressing non-state threats to its security. The more pessimistic view is that Asian security will deteriorate in the coming decades, largely on account of critical traditional and non-traditional challenges and the lack of a so-called 'Asian Security architecture'.

17. I think there are grounds for cautious optimism. Firstly, there is no inevitability of inter-state conflict, for unlike the warring nations of Europe of the first half of the 20th century, none of the Asian powers would wish to put at jeopardy the growth and prosperity that they are experiencing. Second, Asia is too vast and heterogeneous to lend itself to domination by any single country, thus making any attempt at military domination unattractive. Third, Asian states can be expected to show the maturity and wisdom to chart a path of successfully addressing common security challenges without plunging the continent into all-out war. Fourth, Asian states have demonstrated that they are capable of creating models of economic growth and political and security interactions more suited to the divergence and plurality of the Asia-Pacific region. Hence, the absence of over-arching trans-Atlantic type security architecture may in fact be a blessing in disguise for Asia.

18. For its part, India has a vital stake in the evolution of a stable, open, inclusive and balanced security and cooperation architecture in the region. By definition this would need to be a consensus based process, where all the stakeholders who have a legitimate presence in the region make their respective contributions to regional security. India aspires to this vision in cooperation with all countries through partnership and inculcating habits of consultation and dialogue. As a responsible member of the international community, India is ready to contribute constructively to efforts to strengthen Asian security in the 21st century.

19. I hope this Conference has contributed to bringing closer the perspectives of the strategic communities of both India and the United States.

Thank you.

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