

Indo-US Military to Military Relations

By [Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat](#)

Global Research, February 06, 2005

Aerospace & Marine International 19 June
2005

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [Militarization and WMD](#)

Military to military relationships usually have as their underlying basis the tacit approval of the 'limiting boundaries' set by the political leadership of the two countries involved.

The United States has a long and somewhat controversial history of such relationships that it has forged with countries around the world, particularly in The Philippines, South Korea, Japan, Indonesia, Egypt, Nigeria and Latin America and nearer home in Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey and now in Eastern Europe and the Central Asian and Caspian Sea region.

Its military to military relationships with European nations have been of a markedly different character, though immediately after World War II, the US was engaged in a large covert undercover operation, which consisted in eliminating the Communist Resistance in these countries. The latter had gained popular acceptance in several European countries including such as France, Italy and Greece to give some examples, in view of their anti-fascist peoples movements and militia organization at a time when most governments had capitulated to Nazi /fascist atrocities.

Overthrow of democratically elected civilian governments was routine in Brazil, Argentina, Chile or Pakistan if it served the political and economic interests of the US.

[The School of the Americas](#), identified, groomed and trained military and police officers to assume such Leadership roles in their home countries.

The International Police Academy groomed the up and coming police and intelligence officers of the developing countries and gave them the political orientation of the free world , free market economies etc, and of Us sponsored "democracy".

India had stayed largely clear of such joint military/police ventures having a broad understanding of the policy objectives of A NON ALIGNED STATE.

With the spread of such an all encompassing concept as ' Globalization' with policies oriented towards the political and economic objectives of the nation-state all but remaining in name, with arms expenditures of all countries concurrently escalating in an arms race fuelled by antagonisms, the orchestrated 'war on terror' fueled among others by Oil giants and arms manufacturing conglomerates in need of subsidies from national exchequers, strange undercurrents seem to be at play.

In the introduction to a recent publication '[People , Progress, Partnership - The Transformation of US -India Relations](#)' , the outgoing US Secretary of State, General Colin Powell recalls former Prime Minister Vajpayee's words that India and the US are "natural

allies”.

In this context the question arises who are the “natural enemies” of these “natural allies”?

This document has an entire chapter on ‘ [Defense Relations – Shared Strategic Future](#)’ .

During General Colin Powell’s last visit to New Delhi the Secretary of State of the Bush administration, spoke glowingly of ‘Military to Military’ relations progressing, and being the cornerstone of growing Indo-US relations, in this fundamental transformation in relations between the United States and India.

Secretary Powell underlined that ,”together we have opened new levels of co-operation on law enforcement and intelligence sharing”

.It is worthwhile summarizing the major thrust areas of this chapter on ‘ [Defense Relations- Shared Strategic Future](#)’ :

- 1.The key word in the ever expanding lexicon of the US-India defense relationship is “inter-operability” It portrays a future in which the two countries share strategic doctrines and operations in order to tackle the challenges of a new century
- 2.It was India’s swift response to the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the US and its unconditional support for the war on terrorism that galvanized the change in US-India military relations
3. The first steps had already been taken months earlier, when India endorsed the National Missile Defense program unveiled by President Bush in his speech at the National Defense University in May 2001.
4. The announcement of removal of sanctions against India in September 2001 helped to identify mutually overlapping national security goals and gave new impetus to military ties.
- 5.The aim of the burgeoning military ties is to develop capabilities and confidence , jointly confront multilateral security issues , such as protection of energy supplies and sea lanes, conduct peace-keeping and combat terrorism. The military establishments of both countries have much to gain from strengthening this relationship.
6. The development of inter-operable procedures, communications and doctrines is only possible through familiarization , understanding and confidence building , focusing on areas of mutual interest and enhancing the professional development of personnel.
7. Fast paced developments in military to military (“mil to mil”) relations have been the most visible aspect of transforming the bilateral relationship. This is evident from the growing frequency of bilateral exercises ,seminars, personnel exchanges , high level and unit visits and exchanges , as well as military technology sales and cooperation, “and can play an important part in contributing to peace ,security and freedom” in Asia. Admiral Blair former CinC, US Pacific Fleet emphasized during his visit to India:

“We will develop our relationship with India on the basis of India’s emergence as a rising global power.”

8. The guidance document of the US-India defense relationship is the 'Agreed Minute of Defense Relations of 1995. However the relationship has since then acquired many new dimensions and progressed towards "working together in real situations and when the need arises".

A key element of the engagement process is the enlarged '[International Military Education and Training \(IMET\)](#) program which has a questionable record and history in the role that some of the US trained and sponsored officers have subsequently played in overturning democratically elected Governments, replacing them with military juntas or in allying with civil servants who subtly further US interests in their home countries.

9. Joint operations and joint exercises will it is argued in the document under reference, necessitate India possessing compatible equipment and technology. (Even though electronic sensors were marginally effective to check Mexican infiltration across flat land, into the US, India has inducted the same sensors on the LOC in J&K and stationed US technical personnel to install and maintain these sensors).

10. The document quotes former US Ambassador Blackwell as saying

" The US will be a reliable provider of defense commodities to India because a strengthened ,capable and effective Indian military is in America's national interests."

11. The last refrain for 'mil to mil ' relationships is of course combating the regional and global challenges of terrorism.

Two of the initiatives in the recently accelerated relationship have invited reactions which need to be addressed in the background of the continuity and clarity of the definition of what constitute US vital national interests.

These are spelt out in the National Security Strategy documents promulgated periodically.

Therefore several [Indian] media commentators who take the trouble to comment on President Bush being 'good for India' are simply adding to the obfuscation of the core issues. US presidents uphold and relentlessly pursue Corporate America's interests, though their style and rhetoric in public speech may differ.

The control of oil and key mineral resources in West/Central Asia, West Africa and Latin America is the number one priority of US policy and nothing will permit a deviation.

In this regard, 'Rebuilding America's Defenses : Strategy, Forces and Resources', are be reassessed in the framework of the '[Project for the New American Century](#)' (PNAC).

If the criticality of the 'Resource rich' areas is geo-politically necessary, a "Force Posture Review' is undertaken without fuss. US policy is not influenced by sentimentality or even such values frequently resorted to as 'freedom and democracy' though they may be frequently cited to camouflage US corporate interests.

It is hardly necessary to quote examples, in different parts of the world. Democracy plays second fiddle in the pursuit of US global interests.

Some may say that this is 'real-politik' and it has always been so, especially so where imperial interests are to be secured. The problem is not with the United States which has a clear global vision , all spelt out. The real problem lies in the minds of the spin doctors who are out to confuse the public interest of the people of India as to where lie our vital national interests.

November 2004 saw some inspired writing in the mainstream [Indian] media and some TV channels painting a doomsday scenario for the most important non-NATO ally of Washington: Pakistan.

It is being visualized in this scenario that Pakistan is all on the way to 'cracking up / or break up (despite the US economic aid of \$ 3 billion and military Supplies already in the pipeline of one billion dollars) , US military forward operating bases in Pakistan, a pervasive influence and control of the ISI, and close relationships with the Pak military .

Following the break up it is projected that the US and India will intervene to eliminate the Jehadi forces in Pakistan.

This scenario is totally unrealistic and ignores the military strategic objective of the United States in the region with large, debilitating US forces committed in Iraq, preparing for similar action in Iran and the axis of evil; the military forces redeployment to West Africa , and stretched out from Georgia-Azerbaijan to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan , The Kyrgyz republic, Turkmenistan , not to mention the over 700 US bases around the world .

With this reality, Ops "Save Pakistani Freedom" does not appear to be a probable one, with 'save Nepal , Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, on the anvil ! The security management issues confronting us are such that we are in no position to consider interventions outside. The BJP led government 's policy announcements, articulated by Mr LK Advani and Mr Brajesh Mishra " about the same source of terror", will have to rest while the present government devotes itself to pursuing a fragile energy security scenario to keep the people, industry and agriculture going, rather than chasing terrorists in foreign lands.

It is the same type of thinking of their being joint security interests that commits the Indian Navy to 'joint anti-piracy' patrolling with the US Navy in Malacca Straits, without the prior concurrence and participation of Malaysia and Indonesia, the other two nations on the Straits .

The Proliferation Security Initiative is a laudable idea , but it needs UN approval . After all the IAEA is a UN instrument . The US and India unilaterally intercepting , searching , detaining merchant ships in international waters could become messy business and cause avoidable friction and tension , specially when Intelligence is poor as was in Iraq and the Niger Uranium and the aluminium rods case and wholly fabricated in pursuit of US military objectives in other sovereign states.

Any objective analysis will demonstrate that US global designs, plans, preparations, operations have an altogether different dimension and there is very little by way of convergence between a Super Power and India, whose main challenge is to maintain its unity and lift its billion people out of misery and poverty -to feed ,clothe, house, educate, and provide employment to about 18 million young people entering working age new year, apart from the responsibility of nearly six hundred million who are unemployed or under unemployed and , therefore suffer serious malnutrition.

A former Prime -Minister, himself forced to sign the IMF loan and conditionalities and subsequently the Uruguay GATT agreements, US Treasury sponsored 'Reforms' and its consequences spoke of the 'middle path' and cautioned his Government and the country against too close an "Alingan" or embrace.

We now have a situation where the US Armed forces, a hitherto highly professional institution has turned itself deliberately and openly into a killing machine to impress the world with diabolical cruelty; mass murdering men , women and children sparing no one not the ill , maimed or old people in Iraqi cities, much of it on video tape.

Civilians have been bombarded, indescribable methods of torture have been used on children, women and civilians at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere , the infrastructure of cities and towns including water, sanitation , electricity and hospitals have been destroyed for the world to see . The Resistance of the people of Iraq to the occupation of their country and seizure by military means of the Oil resources is being described as "insurgency" and "terrorism." We are witnessing the Nazi assault and holocaust again and a replay of Vietnam on video in the scenes of killings by the Occupation forces emerging from Iraq.

Within the United States the US Administration having politicized the CIA even more than ever before has resulted in a revolt amongst CIA personnel at various levels and departments ,including analysts, and personnel in overt and covert operations. To sideline this dissent the US Secretary of Defense had already created a Special Intelligence Group , in the Pentagon reporting directly to the Secretary of Defense , to provide Intelligence to justify policy decisions already made for Iraq and elsewhere. The latest news leaks are reporting that Covert operations or 'War in the Shadows', in foreign countries will henceforth be carried out by the US Armed Forces , the CIA having been divested of this responsibility due to lack of confidence (and trust) in its personnel. This fundamentally changes the character of the Armed Forces who now become the preferred and sole instrument of the Administration in planning and executing covert operations , which includes assassinations of Heads of State, and political leaders , subversion of local militias and their bosses to serve such political objectives as 'Regime Change' or the blackmailing Governments. In other words, the deployments on the battlefield can change into covert deployments in another country's political arena and its internal affairs as per requirement . That transforms the Generals , Admirals and Air Marshals into secret operatives who will stop at nothing and to whom no rules of engagement will apply. They already enjoy , by the US President's executive order immunity from the International Criminal Court and the Geneva Conventions as interpreted by the President of the United States .

What must be squarely faced, is whether 'mil to mil ' relations, therefore, will generate a similar psyche in the Indian Armed Forces and whether we can remain immune to the example that is being demonstrated in the name of anti-insurgency and counter terror operations, on daily show in Iraq and Palestine.

Will this influence not lead to a blow-back that will completely destabilize a nation with a diversity presently mutually reinforcing in India?

In fact, these objectives if emulated of the US strategic military covert doctrine could turn India 's direction to a theocracy with a contrived ' Internal Enemy'. Importantly will such close relations with US military forces mandated to carry out covert operations against people of sovereign nations not alter the apolitical and hitherto secular and professional character of our much respected Armed Forces ? Will it not result in India's objectives being

questioned in the region and globally ? Are we then not playing with fire?

The world is witnessing a fragile 'energy security ' situation which many experts and conferences on 'peak oil' have categorized as the "End of the Age of Oil". We are witnessing a volatile dollar on a steady decline, with countries, companies and individuals switching to the Euro and gold , having earlier given life support to the US economy , hitherto regarded as a global power house. Today its Government ,, Corporate, and household debt is in trillions and every day and it is the injection of \$ 2.6 billion a day, and 80% of the world's savings that enables the US economy to manage to survive , holding in hostage the Chinese and Japanese economies , East Asia and Europe and the Central Banks , including India. All those who have parked their dollars in US Treasury bonds ! (The Prime -Minister Dr Man Mohan Singh, known for his understatements, underlined at the Senior Commanders Conference , on 26th October, 04 , the "imperatives of the increasingly unstable international environment."

Very few nations would survive this economic time-bomb that is ticking relentlessly. Therefore, to talk of the 'war on terror', which is a cover up for the war to capture resources, is brinkmanship on a global scale.

India has tackled terrorism and insurgency, with political acumen and sagacity; through reconciliation ,bringing about peace in very difficult circumstances. Narcotics , gun running and terrorism together have been and are our foes aimed at corroding the independence of our economic and political policies within and in International fora.

In February 2004, the 'Next Step in Strategic Partnership' (NSSP), was hailed by the BJP leadership as a precursor to the bonanza of hi-tech that would follow. (see <http://news.indiamart.com/news-analysis/indo-us-ties-under-b-8108.html>)

The last BJP led Government. sold out India's vital national interests (see Aerospace & Marine International issue no.10 of May 2004) and brought no major gains. It consistently by-passed Parliament, hid its inter-governmental and agreements from the people and the Parliament wholly in violation of the Republican form of government which mandates open policies.

A former Foreign Secretary Shri Kanwal Sibal now our Ambassador in Moscow is reported in the Hindu, dated 28th October as saying ,

" India and the United States are not strategic partners , and have a long way to before they become thatNSSD 2001 describes India as the US Strategic partner Ignoring the harsh reality that India and the United States cannot be strategic partners until issues related to nuclear power , missiles and dual technologies are resolved . Mr. Kanwal Sibal is further quoted as saying that " India was still subject to US sanctions."

In a recent interview to Hindu , Dr Anil Kakodkar, Chairman, Atomic Energy Commission, in reply to the question "Will the dialogue with the US Next Steps in Strategic Partnership be of any use to India for developing our nuclear power technology ? " answered "I don't think so."

A lot of water has flowed down the Ganges since the days of the BJP led Government went

on an imaginary honeymoon on distant shores.

On 19th September, 2001, Times of India, normally a cautious paper reported on a front page dispatch, datelined New Delhi , under the heading 'India offers America use of three air bases'. The report said

"Even though no military plans have been firmed up by the US for retaliatory strikes , India has identified three air bases in addition to unspecified port facilities on the western seaboard as part of its operational support to the US. The air bases are Avantipur in Jammu & Kashmir (next to Srinagar to be more precise), Adampur in Punjab and Jamnagar to the US. A senior security (defence) official told TNN that the offer was conveyed to the US after it was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security last Thursday (ie around 14th September 2001, three days after 9/11, a record of sorts), after consultation with the three service chiefs who unanimously agreed on the need to support US action. (without knowing its contours and dimensions).. According to the official " The Chiefs felt that the Americans had joined 'our' war against terrorism and we must naturally be the first ones to offer them help". The official stated that Defense Minister Jaswant Singh's articulation of the Governments stand, was motivated by a desire to ensure that Pakistan does not gain by India's default"... The official said India has already begun "operational cooperation" by providing US officials with intelligence on Afghan camps and on the Taliban. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) has gathered a wealth of detail on Pakistani military assistance to the Taliban in the last few years (US ambassador Blackwill meets defence chiefs, page 7) the TOI report concludes."

It is hardly necessary to add that the United States preferred to operate from and with Pakistan. The CCS had made decisions ,without waiting to pause , in a record 72 hours . 'Our war on terrorism' as the Service Chiefs reportedly described it, continued against Cross Border terrorism exported by Pakistan , as here to before ,with little or no assistance from the US except to nudge and cajole us to sit for talks with MINNA. The 'attack' on The Parliament House on 13th December , 2002 led to the ' goofed up' up Ops Parakrama (when the Army Chief asked the Prime Minister, what the PM expected from the war or in other words what the political objective of the unprecedented mobilization or "Stand to" of the Armed forces was to achieve ;all he got in reply was : "Who Baad Mein Batayenge" (that will be told later)

As for R&AW which is ever ready with 'details' for the US , and hardly ever for our own Defense Forces we have the following on record from an Intelligence official, after l'affaire Ravinder Singh in May04.... The Hindu reported in a series of articles the failure to issue directions by the National Security Adviser , Brajesh Mishra, while he was in the know and while the file was with him for some days 'instructions even to prevent the CIA asset to fly out of the country'(He was reportedly under surveillance). Why did Mishra hold back a decision ? Why was Ravinder Singh so important to the Americans is what the Intelligence Adviser in the PMO wants to find out ?

The Hindu report dated 20 August 04 under banner headlines "Why was terror intelligence withheld" reports quotes in extenso Indian Intelligence officials as expressing 'concern over the withholding of terrorism- related information by the United States -information New Delhi believes could be key to saving lives 'Specific instances of non sharing of information gained through interrogations of Al Qaeda operatives like Muhammad Khan , arrested on 13 July, with respect to Al Qaeda operatives in India , as this organization shares infrastructure

with Pak based terrorist groups operating in India. Various arrests of key people in Afghanistan and Pakistan charged with aiding the Taliban also ran extensive terror networks in India . Cases with names running Harkat ul Ansar, like Akhtar , interrogated and detained have been cited at the counter-terror meetings in New Delhi in July '04 but Indian Intelligence has been kept in the dark. "The US assets, which are part of the extensive technical and human intelligence of the US in Pakistan pick up enormous communication intelligence on the activities of terrorist organizations based in Pakistan." Our Intelligence officials have been cited in the Hindu report as saying , "that not one single piece of intelligence has ever been passed on to us . By contrast, we're being regularly mined for whatever we know about these groups." Washington has also been unwilling to facilitate ongoing CBI investigations into the 1999 hijacking of Indian airlines flight IC-814.

A senior Intelligence official told the Hindu that while counter -terrorism has expanded greatly in recent years , much of what was passed on was "vague in the extreme and almost never of operational use." Are we to assume that knowing this state of play the Cabinet Committee on Security and the three Service Chiefs have played a game from 1999 to May 2004, which is fraught with grave consequences , in opening the doors of civil and military intelligence , the sanctum sanctorum, to US and Israeli intelligence. This bonhomie and casualness has extended to joint exercises in J&K and the North East where not only are assets recruited but the 'ground truth' of spy satellite imagery is verified .

All the joint exercises primarily provide windows to probe our electronic warfare and communication vulnerabilities. Friendly countries do not launch almost daily intelligence flights up and down our Western and Eastern seabords from Diego Garcia and Australian bases, nor would their surveillance aircraft and 'research ships' monitor our exercises , missile firings and take gravimetric measurements and hydrological conditions on a fairly regular basis off sensitive Indian vital areas (VAs) and VPs.

The greatest opening into previously barred areas has been encouraged by the former Home Minister and the two Defense Ministers (Fernandes and Jaswant Singh with the tacit concurrence of the former PM and his NSA) . Senior civil, intelligence and military intelligence officials , knowing that this was gravely jeopardizing national security fell in line to curry favor , promotions and gubernatorial posts, like Dave for example. Kashmir and the North -East specially were up for grabs. Otherwise their jobs may have been on line.

The greatest losses have occurred as this ' bonhomie, 'trust' and unmonitored contacts have multiplier effects whose bounds have never been assessed . In the meanwhile the think tanks in New Delhi in particular, and the media in general have been giving encouraging uncritical support, to such activities and individuals.

Will anyone in the new dispensation call for a review of the losses and gains and bring into force time tested checks and balances in the 'mil to mil' and civilian to civilian relations at par with what the US, UK and every prudent nation has thought it appropriate, to minimally safeguard its interests.

The writer is a former Chief of the Naval Staff (India) and an expert on geopolitical, strategic and military issues

[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)

[Become a Member of Global Research](#)

Articles by: [Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca