

Summary of Talk by C. Raja Mohan September 23, 2005

C. Raja Mohan, senior security affairs correspondent for *The Indian Express*, spoke about the recent U.S.-India nuclear agreement that was negotiated in late July during a state visit to the United States by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India.

Mohan began the discussion by describing the nuclear deal between the U.S. and India as "historic", especially for India. The preliminary negotiations had started on March 16, 2005 and culminated during the Prime Minister's visit. Mohan felt that this agreement has been possible because of a strategic shift in thinking in the Bush Administration: Unlike the Clinton administration, the present administration officials believe that nuclear energy is a critical to meet the world's growing energy demands. The agreement came as a surprise to many in Congress, since they were not briefed before the deal was announced. Administration officials have indicated, however, that they will work with Congress to allow for full civilian nuclear cooperation between the two countries by changing domestic laws and garnering international approval. In return, the Indian government agreed to separate its civilian and military nuclear facilities; report and voluntarily hand over its civilian nuclear facilities to the International Atomic and Energy Agency (IAEA); develop a multilateral Fissile Material Cutoff Treaty; maintain its testing moratorium; and continue supporting the non-proliferation of nuclear technologies around the world. Mohan added that the agreement is seen as a "big deal" by the Indian government.

The nuclear deal was spontaneous and came as quite a surprise to members of the U.S. Congress as they were not briefed of this agreement prior to the arrival of the Prime Minister. In this agreement, the Bush Administration pledged to work with Congress.

Next, Mohan brought up four ongoing issues/debates concerning the nuclear deal between the U.S. and India. He recognized, in his first set of issues, that this agreement did not force India to put a cap on its fissile material usage. The second issue he talked about was the cost of separation of India's civilian and military nuclear facilities. He believes that this process will not be as costly as many are making it out to be. The third set of issues being debated is taking place in India's Parliament. He stated that people from the left, i.e. the communist party, have always discouraged India's relationship with the United States. The Left now is beginning to criticize the defense accord signed by the U.S. and India that would allow both countries to strengthen defense ties for the next ten years. The last set of issues that he brought up was that some people on both sides believe that each side has given up too much. Mohan believes that since there has been no history of continued cooperation between the U.S. and India, that the Bush Administration and the Indian government wanted to show the world that they could in fact commit to something big.

After Raja Mohan had made his remarks, the floor was given to Robert J. Einhorn, a senior advisor at the CSIS International Security Program. Einhorn started off by stating that he is in favor and supports the improvement of relations between the United States and India. However, he had a few reservations regarding the nuclear agreement. He wished that Bush were more insistent on developing an agreement that would provide for a cap on the use of fissile material. If India had agreed to such a deal, Einhorn believes, it would have forced countries like China and Pakistan to place a restraint on their own fissile material usage. Furthermore, he stated that since India has only a limited amount of indigenous uranium available, the agreement would allow India to concentrate all of its uranium in the production of more nuclear weapons because its civilian nuclear facilities would be supported by U.S. nuclear energy. Lastly, he stated that the remarks in Tehran by Natwar Singh, the foreign minister of India, has "riled up Republicans" in the U.S. Congress. Einhorn believes that India must be more supportive on the Iran issue by

stating that India does not support Iran's ambitions to create nuclear weapons, rather it does support Iran's nuclear program if used for peaceful purposes.

Subsequently, Raja Mohan responded to Robert Einhorn's comments. He stated that if the idea of putting a cap on fissile materials were used as a "pre-condition" to an agreement on nuclear energy between the U.S. and India, then the agreement would not have been possible. Mohan believes that in order to allow India to do what the U.S. wants, cooperation must take place first. He believes that if Congress approves this deal with India, an agreement on the capping of fissile material will come about eventually. He also believes that once India sees that the U.S. is owning up to its end of the deal, India will begin to take initiatives on its own to restrict some of its other rights i.e. use of fissile materials. Regarding the Iran issue, Mohan does not believe that the U.S. can use it as a "loyalty test". He believes that Iran is not an "end all situation." He went on to say that even if it does come to such an issue, approval of the nuclear deal would just take longer because he believes that eventually the U.S. and India will go ahead with the agreement and continue their relationship.

During the question and answer segment, a question was raised asking whether or not relations between the U.S. and India would be damaged if the U.S. Congress did not approve the deal. Mohan was fairly optimistic in his reply. He stated that India really believes that Bush will be able to convince Congress and the international community that India is a responsible government and deserves full nuclear civilian cooperation. He understands that India needs to do things that would help convince Congress i.e. the Iran situation. He believes that the Iran issue is a complication but it is not "insurmountable." And lastly he stated that in spite of all sorts of complications India and the U.S. have gone through since India became independent, the two countries have found common ground to move forward.

After this conference took place, on September 24, 2005 India decided along with 21 other nations to vote in favor of a U.N. resolution to refer Iran to the United Nations Security Council because Iran had failed to convince the IAEA that its nuclear program was being used for peaceful purposes.