



Secretary Blinken’s Maiden India Visit *Why Democracies Can, and Will Deliver*

27 July – 05 August 2021

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken along with his Indian counterpart S. Jaishankar [took stock](#) of the full range of Indo-U.S. bilateral relations and regional geopolitics during Blinken’s recent India visit. Hailing the Indo-U.S. relationship as ‘consequential’, the two sides agreed to strengthen their cooperation in key strategic areas and resolved to revitalise multilateralism. Building on their foundation of shared values, the Indo-U.S. relationship holds tremendous promise to show that a coalition of democracies can and will deliver to tackle the most pressing global challenges of our time. This edition of CUTS ONW reflects upon the India visit of Secretary Blinken and takeaways from it, along with diverse opinions from various experts.

News/Op-ed	Key Takeaway
<p>Don’t burden Delhi-Washington ties with Afghanistan, or issues like democracy under Modi By <i>Rajesh Rajagopalan</i> The Print August 5, 2021</p>	<p>U.S.-India relations are going from strength to strength, despite the persistence of naysayers on both sides. Much thanks to Beijing that has mainly shouldered the burden of pushing this relationship along, as it remains undeterred by the difficulties of the task or even common sense. While another section of experts is tiring to constantly remind the Indian commentariat to focus on the central purpose and scope of the U.S.-India partnership, it is also essential to do so.</p>
<p>What does Antony Blinken’s firm but graceful refusal to pass judgement on India show? By <i>Oopalee Operajita</i> The Indian Express August 03, 2021</p>	<p>There is just too much at stake in this crucial relationship to let self-righteousness taint it. It takes a large dollop of naïveté to assume that any leader is simply going to jump into an arena now populated by activists and belligerent media persons, and, thereby, jeopardise important bilateral relations. The real world does not work that way. The very act of requesting another nation to interfere in India’s internal affairs is both immature and treacherous, and epitomises our colonial hangover.</p>
<p>Indo-U.S.: When two democracies talk By <i>Harsh V Pant</i> Hindustan Times August 02, 2021</p>	<p>United States Secretary of State, Antony Blinken’s visit to India ended on a high note, despite initial suggestions in some quarters that the Joe Biden administration was keen to take on the Narendra Modi government on what is seen by some as India’s growing “democracy deficit”. Much of this was more about the inherent desire of the partisan critics of the government than it was about the assessment on the ground of the sources pushing India-U.S. convergence.</p>

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<p>The U.S. and India face these 5 challenges. Can they depend on each other? <i>By Christopher Clary</i> The Washington Post August 02, 2021</p>	<p>India’s big debate, scholar Tanvi Madan observes, is “how close to get to the U.S.” as New Delhi deals with a more confrontational China. India seeks Washington’s help in bolstering Indian power, while seeking to avoid giving the United States an ability to constrain Indian choices. And, given prior disagreements during the Cold War and over India’s nuclear weapons program, India has enduring concerns about Washington’s reliability.</p>
<p>China, Pakistan ire on growing Indo-U.S. relations <i>By Shantanu Mukharji</i> WION August 02, 2021</p>	<p>According to security analysts, due to the Quad threat looming large perceived to be targeting China where India, Japan and Australia have joined hands with the U.S., Pakistan is under severe pressure from China to distance itself from the U.S. influence and by default, it would then keep India also at an arm length. The Chinese government also lashed out at Antony Blinken, protesting on the visiting U.S. Secretary of State’s meeting the Dalai Lama representatives describing it as a violation of the U.S. commitment to acknowledge Tibet being a part of China.</p>
<p>Divergences could deepen between U.S. and India as Blinken plays human rights card with New Delhi <i>By Long Xingchun and Liu Beiling</i> Global Times August 02, 2021</p>	<p>In response to criticism from Washington, New Delhi believes that measures are necessary to counter terrorism and maintain stability in Kashmir. On the other hand, New Delhi believes that the U.S., which has serious human rights problems of its own, is not qualified to be a teacher of "human rights" for India and has no right to interfere in India's internal affairs. It's impossible for the Indian government to accept Blinken's criticism and pressure or to change India's domestic policy. Instead, India is willing to teach Washington a lesson on how to practice democracy and protect human rights in a diverse country.</p>
<p>Antony Blinken's Delhi visit a message to China <i>By Sankalp Gurjar</i> Deccan Herald July 31, 2021</p>	<p>In the context of the challenge of China in the Indo-Pacific, the optics of the visit were significant. Blinken held discussions with civil society representatives, including the delegate representing the Tibetan government in exile. The move was a calculated step to send a message to China. Also, the meeting, happening in the wake of the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Tibet, assumes broader strategic significance.</p>
<p>Antony Blinken’s visit and the U.S. factor in Indian foreign policy <i>By Harsh V. Pant</i> Observer Research Foundation July 30, 2021</p>	<p>India’s ties with the U.S. have always stood out for the sheer hyperbole they tend to generate in public discourse. For years, even as China continued to change the strategic environment around India to New Delhi’s disadvantage, our favourite pastime was to talk about the various versions of non-alignment. We pretended that if we remained equidistant between Beijing and Washington, we would be able to keep China in good humor.</p>
<p>Blinken’s India visit in contrast to his deputy’s China trip, offers great clarity on ties <i>By Seshadri Chari</i> The Print July 30, 2021</p>	<p>In contrast to his deputy’s China visit, Blinken’s India visit was as pleasant as the weather in New Delhi on his arrival, and needed no diplomatic umbrella to shield himself from reprimands. But there is little doubt that New Delhi needs to inform the U.S. of its disappointment in relation to Washington’s policy on selective sanctions that suits the U.S. but deeply hurts India’s interests, especially in Iran and Myanmar. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has opened up a host of security issues for New Delhi.</p>

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<p>Blinken’s India visit goes off smoothly <i>By Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan</i> The Diplomat July 30, 2021</p>	<p>Despite concerns on the Indian side, at least among the strategic community, about possible irritants in the India-U.S. bilateral relationship on issues such as human rights, curtailment of religious and media freedoms, and the overall tone of Indian democracy, the visit appears to have gone very well. Prior to the visit, there were apprehensions on the Indian side because of the U.S. focus on democracy, and the apparent weakening of India’s liberal values.</p>
<p>‘Beijing acting more repressively at home and more aggressively abroad’: Antony Blinken <i>By Indrani Bagchi</i> The Times of India July 29, 2021</p>	<p>“For the United States, in a way as for India, it's both one of the most consequential and most complicated relationships that we have. I think we've seen unfortunately, the government in Beijing act more repressively at home and more aggressively abroad. In recent years, that posed a challenge for all of us. We see a relationship that is in parts adversarial, in parts competitive and also in parts cooperative” said Blinken in a conversation with Indrani Bagchi.</p>
<p>Can India make a play in Afghanistan? <i>By Michael Kugelman</i> Foreign Policy July 29, 2021</p>	<p>U.S. and Indian interests align on many levels, but they differ on Afghanistan. Biden’s decision to fully withdraw will ultimately strengthen the Taliban, which have attacked Indian interests and nationals. The fragile U.S.-sponsored intra-Afghan dialogue also intends to produce a political settlement that gives the Taliban a share of the power. That outcome would advantage Pakistan, the Taliban’s ally and India’s rival. (Afghanistan hasn’t had a pro-Pakistan government since U.S. forces overthrew the Taliban regime in 2001)</p>
<p>Washington’s China agenda appears to dominate Blinken’s India visit <i>By Anita Joshua</i> The Telegraph July 29, 2021</p>	<p>Responding to a reference of offering the partnership with India as a democratic alternative to China, Blinken said the shared democratic traditions were part of the conversation. China has described the U.S. agenda in the Indo-Pacific by setting up the Quad with Australia, India and Japan as an Asian NATO, suggesting it is a military alliance. The claim was again countered by Blinken.</p>
<p>China is seen as topping the agenda as U.S. secretary of state begins India visit <i>By Jacob Fromer</i> South China Morning Post July 28, 2021</p>	<p>In contrast, the administration describes its relationship with Beijing now as one based on “stiff competition”. India and China, the world’s two most populous countries, have fought a series of deadly border skirmishes (Paywall) over the last year in the Himalayan region that divides the two nations.</p>
<p>China woos Taliban as U.S. military departs Afghanistan <i>By Guy Taylor</i> The Washington Times July 28, 2021</p>	<p>“Even as we withdraw our forces from Afghanistan and NATO and others withdraw their forces, we remain very much engaged in Afghanistan,” Mr. Blinken told reporters in New Delhi, a key stop on his tour of Asian and Middle Eastern capitals. “We have not only a strong embassy there, but also important programs that continue to support Afghanistan economically, through development assistance, through security assistance.” The comments offered a sharp contrast from what was unfolding a few thousand miles away in China’s northern city of Tianjin, where Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi feted a group of nine Taliban representatives.</p>

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<p>U.S., India agree to expand Multilateral Security Partnership U.S. News July 28, 2021</p>	<p>U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar met in New Delhi and sought to strengthen a regional front against Beijing’s assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific and their cooperation in Afghanistan. They also lauded each country's help in fighting the coronavirus and said their vaccine partnership is an effort to end the pandemic. Blinken also announced a \$25 million fund to support India’s COVID-19 vaccination program.</p>
<p>Why Afghanistan and China dominated India-U.S. talks <i>By Suvojit Bagchi</i> TRT World July 28, 2021</p>	<p>Shared concern to resist the Taliban in Afghanistan, containing China and addressing Washington’s worries about India’s democracy dominated the talks between U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar. The concern for Afghanistan was possibly more serious than the worry about Chinese growth as – to quote Blinken – “Taliban is advancing in the districts”, while the Ministers talk, and “challenging some of the provincial capitals.”</p>
<p>Blinken pulls India closer amid challenges in Afghanistan, China <i>By Gerry Shih</i> The Washington Post July 28, 2021</p>	<p>Hailing Washington’s relationship with India as one of the “most consequential” (Paywall) in the world, Blinken described the two countries as largely in lockstep on the need to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict — as well as to flesh out the Quad, a nascent grouping of four countries that is seen as a U.S.-led effort to counter China’s influence in Asia.</p>
<p>Experts react: American Secretary of State Antony Blinken’s New Delhi visit <i>By Mark Linscott, Atman Trivedi, Shuja Nawaz, Omar Samad, James B. Cunningham</i> Atlantic Council July 27, 2021</p>	<p>The mismatch between positive strategic dynamics and deteriorating trade relations should be a cause for concern. Particularly as developments in both countries render the ubiquitous slogan of shared interests as the oldest and largest democracies a bit hollow, the failure to prioritise trade and reverse its downward trajectory can undermine shared ambitions to make this the most important bilateral relationship of the 21st century.</p>
<p>Blinken's India visit puts human rights, China on table <i>By Sheikh Saaliq</i> The Washington Post July 27, 2021</p>	<p>Washington has long viewed India as a key partner in efforts to blunt increasing Chinese assertiveness in the region. The U.S. and India are part of the Quad — a group that also includes Japan and Australia — allies in the region helping deal with China’s growing economic and military strength. While the Biden administration has indicated it wants a more civil relationship with Beijing, its shown no sign of softening the Trump administration’s confrontational measures on trade, technology and human rights.</p>

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