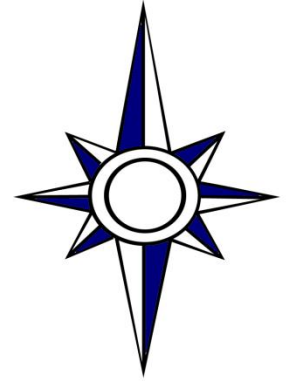


Comparative Connections

A Triannual E-Journal on East Asian Bilateral Relations



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India-US and India-East Asia Relations: Triangulate This

Over a decade into the “normalization” of US-India relations and nearly 20 years into India’s “Look East” policy, the US-India-East Asia nexus is regularly articulated by the US and India, generally accepted in the region, and shows some signs of gaining traction including a regular US-India dialogue on East Asia and the launch of the first-ever US-India-Japan trilateral dialogue. More broadly, US views of India as part of Asia now encompass mental as well as policy maps (though not yet bureaucratic and all geographical ones) and transcend party politics. Meanwhile, US-India bilateral relations move steadily if sometimes frustratingly forward, and India-East Asia ties continue to deepen and widen though to neither side’s full satisfaction. One thing is clear: triangulation depends above all on India’s own commitment and actions to build a closer relationship with the wider Asia-Pacific region. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in an echo of comments made by regional leaders over the years, told an Indian audience in Chennai in July that “India’s leadership will help to shape positively the future of the Asia Pacific. That’s why ... *we encourage India not just to look east, but to engage east and act east as well* [emphasis added].”

United States-India relations in 2011

US-India relations in 2011 were cordial and constructive but could not match the fanfare and high profile that closed out 2010 – most notably the important and successful visit of President Obama to India in November. Still, the bilateral relationship is sustained by the some 25 ongoing institutional dialogue mechanisms covering a range of potential geographic, economic, security, and political cooperation issues. A highlight of 2011 was in July when the second US-India Strategic Dialogue was held in India. External Affairs Minister S. M. Krishna described it as the “bedrock on which we are building our global strategic partnership...” During 2011, partly in the absence of a policy-driving event such as a presidential or prime ministerial visit, both sides decided to build on this dialogue and the institutional architecture of bilateral ties. To coordinate policies on other regions, Washington and New Delhi launched separate dialogues on Central Asia (in June), West Asia (in July), and announced plans to “expand strategic consultations to other regions, including Latin America and Caribbean.” Recall that New Delhi and Washington earlier announced plans to focus on joint cooperation with Africa during the Obama visit to India in November 2010. Of the region-focused dialogues, the one that has met most often is the one on East Asia which has had four meetings thus far – most recently in September. This suggests the prominence being given by both countries to expanding their interactions in the Asia-Pacific region as part of their global partnership.

Apart from discussions on regional issues, the two countries also held their first bilateral dialogue on United Nations matters in New Delhi in March and launched a homeland security dialogue in May and the first US-India-Japan trilateral dialogue in December. So the underlying structure of the relationship continued to expand and to some extent deepen during 2011.

On core issues however, progress was mixed. In April, for example, India decided not to “down-select” or short-list the US-offered *F-16IN Super Viper* or the *F/A-18E/F Super Hornet* for fulfilling its requirement for 126 Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA). Considerable public commentary ensued about the reasons, ranging from political to technical explanations. The two governments, however, handled with equanimity what must clearly have been a disappointment to the US government and companies. An example of downplaying of the issue was that defense acquisitions were mentioned as the seventh of 10 items in the defense section of the July 2011 US-India Strategic Dialogue joint statement. Instead, the two countries focused on the positive fact that India’s defense orders from the US had reached \$8 billion over the past decade – with no mention of the MMRCA.

Meanwhile, there has been no publicly announced progress on discussions to reach agreements for logistics supply or to facilitate military communications or even accept a US offer to have an Indian military officer based at the US Pacific Command headquarters in Hawaii. Overall, however, US-Indian defense discussions, exchanges, and visits continue at a sustained and much higher level than ever before and there is considerable interest within the two militaries in further cooperation. An example of the positive attitude toward future prospects for the defense relationship was expressed in the release of a November 2011 Report to Congress on US-India Security Cooperation. The report reviewed the forward trends in relations across dialogue and service-level activities. An interesting sentence in the report, particularly in light of India’s decision earlier in the year not to down-select US-offered fighter aircraft for acquisition, was that “[s]hould India indicate interest in the JSF [Joint Strike Fighter], the United States would be prepared to provide information on the JSF and its requirements (infrastructure, security, etc.) to support India’s future planning.”

Progress on nuclear cooperation in 2011 was not achieved. In fact, some new issues arose that complicated mutual understandings on next steps. According to former Indian Ambassador to the US Ronen Sen, the Obama administration’s move to block the 46-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) from transferring enrichment and reprocessing (ENR) technologies globally has undercut Indian confidence in the US commitment to cooperate in the civil nuclear arena. Meanwhile, he acknowledged that India would have to reconcile “our international obligations to exclude supplier liabilities and adherence to our domestic law which mandates stringent supplier liabilities. It remains to be seen how we will square this circle.” In the official dialogue, both the US and India reiterated mutual commitment to civil nuclear cooperation, but the Indian need for reassurance of US commitment was evident as was the US requirement for the Indian government to complete unfinished business. India’s External Affairs Minister Krishna said he was “reassured that United States reaffirmed its commitment for full civil nuclear cooperation” – presumably referring to the transfer of ENR technologies. Secretary Clinton however made no such explicit commitment and reminded the audience at the joint press conference that “[w]e need to resolve those issues that still remain so we can reap the rewards of the extraordinary work that both of our Governments have done” – most likely referring to India’s failure to

address supplier liability issues. It remains to be seen if any progress will be made on these issues in 2012.

On the related issue of India joining four major export control regimes, though Minister Krishna expressed appreciation for US support, he called for “for India’s full membership of the four export control regimes and our expectation of progress in tandem on the four regimes.” Secretary Clinton made it clear that the US strongly supports India’s full membership in the four regimes, including the Nuclear Suppliers Group, but “in a phased manner” – a nuanced difference from Krishna’s call for “tandem” inclusion. The gap in the two positions reflects different visions of the steps required for compliance with the regimes as well as the sequencing that needs to occur.

While the defense and nuclear dimensions of the US-India relationship remained very much works in progress during 2011, the economic dimension was a comparative bright spot. If both goods and services are counted, bilateral trade now hovers around \$90 billion and is growing at almost 30 percent each year, Indian investment in the US has been rising (not least because of Indian companies, desire to invest outside India) and India remains a major source of US foreign students and the income generated by their presence in the US. However, there are also a number of difficult elements in US-India economic relations. External Affairs Minister Krishna in a press briefing following the July 2011 strategic dialogue laid them out with specificity:

While we lauded the growth in trade and investment flows in both directions, we also acknowledged that there was enormous potential for further expansion. We have agreed to resume negotiations on a bilateral investment treaty. I also took the opportunity to convey to Secretary Clinton the concerns of our IT companies in sending their professionals to execute projects and conduct business in the United States. I highlighted that Indian IT companies are contributing to the US economy through investments, employment and supporting US competitiveness. I also requested Secretary Clinton to consider a Totalisation Agreement with India.

It is clear from this intervention what India’s priorities are for the economic relationship. However, while discussions on these matters will continue, it is unlikely that agreement on a bilateral investment treaty or a totalization agreement (that would exempt IT professionals from India from paying social security levies in US to offset the impact of a visa fee hike made last year) will be reached soon; both because of the inherent difficulties these issues pose but also because of both countries’ increasing focus on domestic issues as they gear up for elections. The US has a long list of complaints about commercial conditions and more fundamentally about Indian commitment to further economic reforms. This was dramatically illustrated late in the year when India announced relaxation of restrictions for foreign direct investment (FDI) in the retail sector only to have to suspend the decision after the outbreak of public protest and intra-coalition and parliamentary dissonance.

A final point about US-India relations in 2011 pertains to their interaction in the UN Security Council, where India completed the first year of its two-year non-permanent term. As noted above, the US and India established a dialogue earlier in the year to better understand and coordinate their positions in the UNSC, suggesting that what is going on already is not sufficient or at least not effective. The relationship at the UN traditionally has been one of considerable

dissonance between the two countries and with potentially some important matters slated for consideration there in 2012 – such as Iran sanctions, Syria, possibly Burma – it will be an aspect worth closely watching in the year ahead.

India-East Asia relations in 2011

India's interactions with East Asia continued apace in 2011 with a range of multilateral and bilateral meetings as in previous years. However, US and East Asian officials continue to express varying degrees of disappointment and even irritation at what they see as the lack of Indian dynamism in engaging East Asia. Of course, some Indians wonder what the responses would be if India were to seek to launch any major political or security initiatives in the region and just precisely what India could do that would be of salience and interest to some 20 countries across this wide region. Meanwhile, in the absence of a dynamic "Act East" policy to match its stated "Look East" policy, India's priorities as expressed by officials seem to focus on the economic dimension of its engagement. As noted in last year's article, one priority has been inclusion in the region's emerging integration both through increased commercial, trade, and investment ties and the completion of bilateral and multilateral economic agreements.

One theme that was played repeatedly by India with its regional counterparts was a plea for more imports from India. For example, at the 5th meeting of the India-Malaysia Joint Commission in May 2011, an Indian official stated that "[w]e have also requested the Malaysian side to consider greater imports from India as a way of having balanced and sustainable trade in the long term." Similar calls were made by India in formal meetings with China, Australia, New Zealand, and Thailand. In general, Indian officials are acutely aware that commercial relationships with Asia are far from reaching their full potential.

A second economic theme played by India was its commitment to East Asian integration. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, in his remarks at the 6th East Asia Summit Plenary session in November 2011, renewed emphasis on this element of India's relations with East Asia saying:

India is working actively to integrate with this region. We are in the process of finalising a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with ASEAN. We have concluded similar agreements with the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Japan. An agreement is already in place with Singapore. We have commenced negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement with Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand. Several useful reports and studies by the Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia have been produced and contain proposals which can be taken forward. These include a Comprehensive Asian Development Plan to enhance connectivity in the region.

In addition to the economic themes, India's interactions with East Asia during the year sought to garner support for nuclear energy cooperation with Japan and the ROK and on uranium sales and uranium mining in Mongolia. India also used leadership visits to Korea and Mongolia to highlight shared values of democracy, rule of law, and respect for human values.

India-China

In 2011, the year after the 60th anniversary of Sino-Indian relations, no major bilateral visits took place though Prime Minister Singh did travel to China in April for a BRICS summit and met President Hu on the sidelines. Also Singh and Premier Wen Jiabao met on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit held in Bali in November. However, a number of disputes and disagreements occurred over the year – the most important perhaps being the postponement by China of a scheduled round of border talks due to India allowing the Dalai Lama to speak at the Global Buddhist Congregation.

A notable development was the announcement of what Prime Minister Singh called a “new mechanism to maintain peace and tranquillity [sic] on the border.” His national security advisor provided a fuller explanation saying the “Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination” was designed to “...consult and coordinate on border affairs relating to the maintenance of peace and tranquility, if there are any issues; and will explore cooperation in the border areas ... It will implement the agreements ... [the] 1993 and 1996 Border Peace and Tranquility Agreement and the CBM agreement.”

Even more striking was the repeated Indian official statements that seemed to downplay any problems on the border. For example, Ambassador Menon stated that “*[i]t is one of the most peaceful borders that we have* [emphasis added].” And at a press briefing following Prime Minister Singh and Premier Wen’s meeting on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit later in the year, Secretary (East) Sanjay Singh told the press that “they also noted with satisfaction that the boundary was peaceful and tranquil.” It appears that accentuating the peacefulness and tranquility of the border has supplanted earlier emphasis on the pace at which the dispute should be resolved – with the Indians pressing for quicker resolution and the Chinese placing the settlement in the context of the wider relationship.

Meanwhile, the Sino-Indian economic relationship continues to grow (with a target of two-way trade of \$100 billion by 2015) despite ongoing Indian complaints about access. Prime Minister Singh highlighted the issue of the trade imbalance to reporters saying,

[w]ell I did raise the question of the trade imbalance. We import goods and services which give rise to the severe trade imbalances. President Hu Jintao recognised that it is the problem. I also specifically mentioned two areas, one pharmaceutical industry and the other IT ... I cannot say he said precisely this with regard to these two areas, but he did say that he did recognise that China has also the responsibility to tackle the problem of trade imbalances.

Sino-Indian defense exchanges also continued during the year, notwithstanding a flap in the previous year about China denying a visa to a Kashmir-based Indian army officer. In fact, Indian officials took some effort to clarify media misunderstandings that bilateral defense exchanges had been “frozen.” National Security Advisor Menon told journalists in April that, “[j]ust to clarify, we never froze defence exchanges; we have always continued defence exchanges ... But following the discussions ... about these exchanges, it has been agreed that a multi-command Indian Army delegation will be visiting China later this year; and we are also discussing further

exchanges and visits in this sector during the year.” Indeed the 4th Annual Defence Dialogue (ADD) with China was held in Delhi in December.

On an altercation over plans announced by India and Vietnam in September that they would jointly explore for energy near the contested Spratly Islands, Indian Secretary (East) Sanjay Singh, in reply to a press question, stated that “Prime Minister observed [to Premier Wen Jiabao in November at the East Asia Summit] that exploration of oil and gas in the South China Sea by India was purely a commercial activity, and that the issues of sovereignty should be resolved according to international law and practice.” This response appeared to also address Chinese Foreign Ministry warnings that it did not “want to see foreign companies engage in activities that will undermine China’s sovereignty and rights and interests.” These statements followed a murky episode in July in which an Indian naval ship visiting Vietnam was allegedly sent a radio message by China warning it stay out of Chinese waters.

India-Japan relations

India-Japan relations were low-key during 2011, though the novelty of the first-ever US-Japan-India trilateral meeting in mid-December attracted some attention. Other important events during the year included the signing and entry into force of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), a summit between Prime Ministers Singh and Noda Yoshihiko on the sidelines of the UNGA in September, the holding of the fifth Japan-India Foreign Ministers’ Strategic Dialogue in October, and Noda’s visit to India at the end of the year.

In mid-February, the two countries signed the CEPA – the negotiations for which had been concluded at the end of 2010 during Prime Minister Singh’s visit to Tokyo. At the signing, Foreign Minister Maehara Seiji, according to an official statement, expressed his intention to cooperate with India on development of rare earths, and reaffirmed Japan’s commitment to the steady implementation of the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) and realization of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) project, stating that Japan seeks to contribute to India’s development.” It entered into force in August.

At the prime ministers’ meeting the two sides welcomed the signing of the CEPA, acknowledged the importance of the Indian Ocean and sea lanes, agreed to discuss “reinforcement of bilateral cooperation on the security front” (without any publicly announced details) and decided to make 2012, the 60th anniversary of India-Japan relations “an essential opportunity for raising broad public awareness about the cultural and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries, among other exchanges.” There was no reported progress on nuclear cooperation. But what is worth noting is that the Japan Foreign Ministry website statement regarding the issue does not re-state earlier conditions for cooperation but rather sets the issue in the context of the terrible nuclear disaster in Japan. The case for a civil nuclear cooperation agreement seems to have been raised by Singh to which Noda “stated that bringing the accidents at the Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Station under stable control is the highest priority of the administration; that Japan will carry out a thorough investigation of the accident and share the information with India in a swift and accurate manner; and that taking account of these points, Japan would like to move forward the cooperation with India.” At the subsequent foreign ministers’ dialogue the next month, a similar formulation was articulated, although Foreign Minister Gamba is reported to

have “also asked for India’s understanding on Japan’s strong sentiment on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation as the only country to have ever suffered a wartime nuclear devastation.” Again, the previously stated Japanese requirements for the completion of an agreement for civil nuclear cooperation now under negotiation are not highlighted. One other interesting note from the 5th Strategic Dialogue was the explicit suggestion by External Affairs Minister Krishna for a “bilateral exercise between Maritime Self-Defense Force and Indian Navy.” No Japanese response to the proposal is recorded.

The December 2011 US-Japan-India trilateral dialogue reportedly took place in a relaxed and constructive manner. Press reports suggest that discussions were wide-ranging, examined opportunities to also cooperate with China, and set the stage for possibly more detailed talks in the future.

Prime Minister Noda’s visit to India on Dec. 29 also showed the continuing commitment to high-level ties. In a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the visit, the two countries agreed to conduct naval exercises in the Indian Ocean, continue with a Japan-funded freight corridor between Delhi and Mumbai, and increase an existing currency swap arrangement from \$3 billion to \$15 billion for the troubled Indian rupee. There was no significant progress on negotiations on nuclear cooperation, although it is worth noting that the joint statement separates discussion of civil nuclear cooperation negotiations and the two countries broader nonproliferation and disarmament policies.

India-Republic of Korea

The most important event in India-ROK relations in 2011 was the visit of President Pratibha Patil to Seoul. This followed President Lee Myung-bak’s January 2010 visit to India where he was chief guest at the Republic Day celebrations. They noted that “bilateral trade grew more than 40 percent in 2010 consequent to the operationalisation of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) with effect from 1st of January 2010” and that two-way trade was now more than \$20 billion with a target of \$30 billion by 2014. India is now the seventh largest export destination for the ROK and one of India’s top 10 sources of foreign direct investment. Some 300 Korean companies have facilities in India, employing some 40,000 workers. Defense cooperation was also discussed with a planned visit of the Korean defense minister to India and the opening of a defense attaché office at the Indian Embassy in Seoul. Finally, an agreement for cooperation in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy was signed with Korea reportedly interested in export opportunities to the Indian energy market. However, Indian officials were extremely reticent to discuss details of the agreement in a press briefing.

India-ASEAN/Southeast Asia

India’s ties with ASEAN and individual Southeast Asian countries continued to develop in 2011. 2012 will mark the 20th anniversary of the formal India-ASEAN relationship (India became a sectoral dialogue partner of ASEAN in 1992). India is now a full participant of ASEAN-led forums including the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). An India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit is planned for December 2012. India appears to be using all the ASEAN-approved phrases regarding its interactions. For example, Prime Minister Singh,

at the November EAS, stated that “India has consistently supported the centrality of ASEAN in the EAS architecture and the ASEAN way of dialogue at a pace comfortable to all.” Also, two meetings of the ASEAN-India Eminent Persons Group were held during 2011 in order to produce a draft ASEAN-India Vision 2020 document to advance ties. On the economic front, negotiations are ongoing for a Free Trade Agreement in Services and Investments. Overall India-ASEAN economic relations continue to grow. Trade reached over \$50 billion in 2011 and a \$70 billion target has been set for 2012. There are also efforts to promote more travel and exchanges. Indian officials pointed out to the media that of 11 countries eligible for visa on arrival in India, seven are from ASEAN.

2011 brought several ASEAN member country leaders to India. Among the important visits was that of Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as the chief guest for India’s Republic Day in January. In March, Malaysia’s Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin visited Mumbai and New Delhi primarily to promote economic cooperation. Malaysia remains an important bilateral economic partner and is currently country coordinator for the talks on an India-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement in Services and Investments. Also in March, Albert del Rosario, secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines visited India for the inaugural meeting of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation. India and the Philippines, very much an emerging relationship, agreed to establish a Joint Working Group on Cooperation in Counter Terrorism, agreed to rename their “Security Dialogue” as a “Strategic Dialogue,” urged the early convening of the first meeting of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC), and announced the initiation of flights between Manila and Delhi six times a week. In April, Thailand’s Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva led a high-level delegation to India; his first visit since taking office in 2008. Other important developments in India-Southeast Asia relations are covered immediately below.

India-Burma/Myanmar: External Affairs Minister Krishna traveled to Burma in June for his country’s first meeting with the newly established civilian government that took office at the end of March. In a pre-departure statement he stated that “[t]he visit will give us an opportunity to further vitalize our multi-faceted relationship in the new political environment.” A specific purpose of the visit was to “inaugurate three of the ten Rice Silos (Warehouses) being set up in Myanmar and with India’s assistance following the devastating Cyclone Nargis that hit the country 3 years ago.”

In October, Myanmar President Thein Sein and 10 Cabinet members visited India and met Prime Minister Singh and other senior officials. They agreed to expand cooperation in oil and gas exploration, open up border trade, and speed up the construction of natural gas pipelines. India also offered \$500 million in credits for infrastructure projects, including roads, inland waterways, and ports.

India has steadily improved its ties with the military-led government and like other countries will have to adapt to the evolving political environment in the country. What Indian policy appears to have demonstrated over the past several years – a policy that is unlikely to change – is that interests relating to China’s position, insurgents operating from Burma, and commerce, including infrastructure connectivity and energy resources, will continue to drive New Delhi’s policy regardless of the political configuration in the country.

India-Vietnam: Two important mutual visits took place in 2011. In September, External Affairs Minister Krishna visited Vietnam for the 14th India-Vietnam Joint Commission Meeting on Trade and the next month President of Vietnam Truong Tan Sang visited India. India expressed eagerness for the visit with the spokesman pointing out that “President Sang assumed office in August 2011 and this is his very first visit outside the ASEAN region. We look forward to rolling out a red carpet welcome for the President.” And India characterized the state of relations positively saying “Our ties are marked by mutual trust and a near identity of outlook on bilateral, regional and international issues, and matters of common interest. The relations are free of any divergences.” Bilateral economic relations are growing with trade jumping some 34 percent, but from a low base of \$3.5 billion. The two countries set a target of \$7 billion for 2015. Unusually, India remains comparatively more important to Vietnam than vice versa – being Hanoi’s 10th largest trade partner. India also runs a trade surplus with Vietnam though Indian officials made a point of noting that the imbalance in India’s favor was beginning to decline following Vietnam’s ratification of the India-ASEAN FTA, which led to a 136 percent increase in Vietnam’s exports to India. Already, nearly \$250 million have been invested by Indian companies in 54 ventures in Vietnam. Indian and Vietnamese energy companies ONGC Videsh Limited and PetroVietnam also signed an agreement in October to further energy cooperation in areas Vietnam claims as part of its exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea – and about which China raised some warnings. The two countries plan to mark the 40th anniversary of bilateral relations in 2012 with a ‘Year of India in Vietnam.’”

India-Australia

The highlight in India-Australia relations in 2011 was the annual Foreign Ministers’ Framework Dialogue (FMFD) held in January in Australia. At the time, External Affairs Minister Krishna said “We also discussed the uranium issue; I drew attention to our requirements, particularly in the context of climate change and India’s energy and development requirements.” Later in the year, the Australian National Labour Party made an internal decision to change its policy and sell uranium to India. The FMFD also “agreed to regular senior officials consultations on IOR-ARC [Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation].”

Economic relations remain relevant to both sides with India now Australia’s third largest overall market and fifth largest trade partner. Australia is India’s sixth largest trading partner. However, as with other countries, India has a trade imbalance. During the FMFD External Affairs Minister Krishna “noted that the trade imbalance with Australia was the second largest that India had with any of its trading partners. He urged greater flexibility and requested for early action and on issues that impacted on India’s exports to Australia...”

Late in the year, Indian media carried unconfirmed reports alleging that Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd had claimed India was “really quite positive” about a trilateral US-India-Australia economic and security arrangement. According to the press article, India’s External Affairs Ministry was “not aware of any such proposal” though an unnamed Indian official expressed definite interest in expanded defense cooperation with Australia in counterterrorism and maritime security but not in the context of a security grouping.

India-New Zealand

In June, Prime Minister John Key and Trade Minister Tim Groser led a business delegation to India to promote commercial links, particularly in “sectors like education, agriculture, dairy farming, food processing...” Bilateral trade remains very small, less than a \$1 billion. But the number of Indian students in New Zealand has increased from about 163 a decade ago to nearly 10,000 today. On defense cooperation, Prime Minister Key announced that New Zealand will appoint a defense advisor to India and both sides agreed that safety of sea land and maritime security required regional and global cooperation.

Conclusion: triangulate this!

In 2012 no major advances in either US-India or India-East Asia relations are expected. Both the US and India will be in “election-mode” over the coming year and no head of government visits are planned, although the two leaders will likely meet on the sidelines of such events as the UNGA, G20, and the East Asia Summit. In the absence of high-profile events to move the US-India relationship forward, officials are expected to keep the relationship on an even track by using the 25-plus established mechanisms to push progress on concrete issues ranging from defense and nuclear cooperation to trade and investment. Similarly, in the case of India-East Asia relations, the now-institutionalized nature of India’s bilateral and multilateral ties with the region will keep engagement alive. Meanwhile, new mechanisms such as the US-India dialogue on East Asia and the US-Japan-India trilateral dialogue will inch forward the concept of triangulation in US-India-East Asia relations.

Chronology of India Relations with US and East Asia January – December 2011

Jan 18-20, 2011: India’s External Affairs Minister (EAM) S.M. Krishna visits Australia to attend the Foreign Ministers’ Framework Dialogue.

Jan. 24-26, 2011: Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono makes a state visit to India as chief guest for India’s Republic Day.

March 8-12, 2011: Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Muhyiddin Yassin visits Mumbai and New Delhi primarily to promote economic cooperation.

March 15, 2011: Albert del Rosario, secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs of the Philippines visits India for the inaugural meeting of the Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation.

April 5, 2011: Thailand Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva leads a delegation to India; his first visit since taking office in 2008.

April 8-9, 2011: Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao visits Japan to meet Japanese counterparts.

April 13, 2011: Prime Minister (PM) Manmohan Singh meets President Hu Jintao on the sidelines of the 3rd BRICs meeting in Sanya, China.

May 3, 2011: EAM Krishna visits Malaysia for the 5th India-Malaysia Joint Commission Meeting.

May 26, 2011: US and India conduct their first-ever homeland security dialogue.

June 20-22, 2011: EAM Krishna makes first high-level Indian visit to Myanmar after newly established civilian government takes office.

June 26-30, 2011: New Zealand Prime Minister John Key and Trade Minister Tim Groser visit India.

July 18-21, 2011: US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visits India (New Delhi and Chennai) for the 2nd India-US Strategic Dialogue.

July 24-27, 2011: Indian President Pratibha Patil visits Republic of Korea.

July 27-30, 2011: President Pratibha visits Mongolia after a gap of 23 years and signs three agreements covering defense cooperation, media exchanges, and cooperation between India's Planning Commission and Mongolia's National Development Innovation Committee.

July 22-23, 2011: EAM Krishna travels to Bali to participate in the 9th India-ASEAN Post-Ministerial Conference, the East Asia Summit Foreign Ministers Consultations, and the ASEAN Regional Forum Ministerial Meeting.

Oct. 11-14, 2011: Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang visits India.

Oct. 12-15, 2011: Myanmar President Thein Sein and 10 Cabinet members visit India.

Oct. 28-30, 2011: EAM Krishna visits Japan and meets Prime Minister Noda Yoshihiko and Foreign Minister Gamba Koichiro.

Nov. 17-20, 2011: PM Singh attends the Ninth ASEAN-India Summit and the Sixth East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bali.

Nov. 18, 2011: President Barack Obama and PM Singh meet on the sidelines of the EAS in Bali; their first meeting since Obama's visit to India in November 2010.

Nov 18, 2011: PM Singh and Cambodian PM Hun Sen meet on the sidelines of the EAS.

Dec. 6-9, 2011: Australian Defense Minister Stephen Smith visits India and meets counterpart A.K. Antony. They take steps to build on the strategic partnership under the framework of the 2009 Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation.

Dec. 19, 2011: US hosts Japan and India for the first-ever trilateral dialogue to exchange views on regional and global issues of mutual interest.

Dec. 27-29, 2011: Japanese Prime Minister Noda visits New Delhi to reinforce relations and boost trade and investment based on a free trade agreement between the two countries that came into force in August.