

The United States – India Strategic Relationship

**A Monograph
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Abstract

THE UNITED STATES – INDIA STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP by Stephen P. Bergeman, Federal Bureau of Investigation, 57 pages.

India is grappling with its current and future geostrategic role, which ranges from acting as a regional security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to assuming the role of a world economic and military power. What role India pursues will affect the balance of power in the IOR and the greater Pacific theater, as the United States refocuses towards the Pacific and the Chinese navy deploys with regularity into the IOR to secure access to raw materials. By examining the significant national security events in India's history, from 1947 to the present, and looking at how these events have affected India's perception of itself and the creation of Indian national security strategy, the United States can better understand Indian intentions. The paper discusses some of the challenges inherent with this new strategic relationship between the United States and India and provides recommendations for enhancing the relationship.

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Introduction

With a growing economy and middle class, and an increasingly modern military to include nuclear weapons, India is grappling with its current and future geostrategic role, which ranges from acting as a regional security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), to assuming the role of a world economic and military power. What role India pursues will affect the balance of power in the IOR and the greater Pacific theater, as the United States refocuses towards the Pacific and the Chinese navy deploys with regularity into the IOR to secure access to raw materials. India's decision will also affect its bordering countries, which represent an unstable and dangerous neighborhood. *Foreign Policy* magazine's 2010 index of failed states included five of India's neighbors in the top 25: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka, with Nepal just outside the top 25.¹ India's eastern neighbor Pakistan also maintains a nuclear arsenal. From the United States' geostrategic perspective, the current strategic relationship with India is not only very important militarily and economically; it represents a democracy of over one billion people in a volatile part of the world which is relatively friendly to the United States.

This paper examines the significant national security events in India's history, from 1947 to the present, and looks at how these events have affected India's perception of itself and the creation of Indian national security strategy. The paper also examines how the United States has viewed India since 1947. The paper discusses some of the challenges inherent with this new strategic relationship between the United States and India. It also provides recommendations for enhancing the existing strategic relationship between the United States and India.

India remains a country of contradictions on many levels. It has a nuclear arsenal coupled with a crumbling infrastructure; a culturally rich country that still grapples with a caste system and bureaucracy which inhibits economic growth; and a culture that produced a treatise on diplomacy more than 2,300

¹ Walter C. Ladwig III, "India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi Become a Conventional Great Power?" *Asian Survey* 50, no. 6 (November 2010): 1170.

years ago which is now adjusting to their role in a multi-polar world. In his 2001 book, *India: Emerging Power*, Stephen Cohen, a South Asia expert from the Brookings Institute stated, “India has long been counted among the have-nots. This situation is rapidly changing, which is what will make India such an interesting ‘great’ power for the next dozen years. Though India may be the weakest of the great states and still unable to do some important things, it is capable of surprises. It cannot be ignored, but neither will it act like a great power at all times.”² India is approaching its 65th anniversary after gaining independence from the British in 1947. Culturally, India has a rich history, but as a country on the diplomatic world stage, it is relatively young.

Robert Kaplan described the important of the IOR to the United States in his 2010 book, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*. Kaplan states, “In a densely interconnected world, America’s ability to grasp what, in a larger sense, the monsoon represents and to recognize its manifold implications will help determine America’s own destiny and that of the West as a whole. Thus, the Indian Ocean may be the essential place to contemplate the future of U.S. power.”³ Kaplan adds, “The Indian Ocean is where the rivalry between the United States and China in the Pacific interlocks with the regional rivalry between China and India, and also with America’s fight against Islamic terrorism in the Middle East, which includes America’s attempt to contain Iran.”⁴ The United States recognizes the importance of the IOR and India’s significance as the dominant regional actor. The recent strategic communications from the United States, to include the January 2012 Pentagon report titled *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, articulates the United States’ rebalancing toward the Asia-Pacific region and the importance of India in that rebalancing effort.⁵

² Stephen P. Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (The Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., 2001), 35.

³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York, Random House, 2010), xiv.

⁴ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 9.

⁵ In addition to *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, the following documents also highlight the importance of the Asia-Pacific region: United States Pacific Command Strategic Guidance, September 2010; A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower, United States Navy, United States Marine Corps, United

India and the United States share some common national security interests in the IOR, to include free access to sea lanes of communication, a relatively stable India-Pakistan border free from nuclear escalation, and the ability to counter a potential Chinese effort to militarily and economically dominate the IOR. Indians' opinion of the United States has improved in the era after the non-aligned movement. The Pew Global Attitudes Survey released in June 2005 asked people in sixteen countries whether they had a favorable impression of the United States. 71% of Indians had a favorable impression of the United States. Only the Americans polled had a higher favorable rate of the United States, at 83%.⁶

The future of the United States – India strategic relationship, and whether it will ultimately be effective, will depend on a myriad of factors. There are challenges to this strategic relationship. One of these challenges is India's dependence on Iranian oil and India's reluctance to support international sanctions against Iran. Another challenge is India's refusal to enter in a formal mutual security alliance with any country. The United States has taken steps to move the relationship forward. On December 18, 2006 President Bush signed the Hyde Act which allowed civil nuclear cooperation with India, and was a by-product of the U.S.-India Civil Nuclear Agreement signed by the United States and India. The agreement was significant since India remains a non-signatory of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons or NPT. The Bush administration also began to “de-hyphenate” the relationship between India and Pakistan; that is, not deal with the two countries as one entity. If the relationship is to be successful in the long term, the significant factor will be how the United States engages with India; either as a global hegemonic leader in a unipolar world, or as an “equal” in a multi-polar world. How this

States Coast Guard, October, 2007; Statement of Admiral Robert F. Willard, U.S. Navy Commander, U.S. Pacific Command before the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense, on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, April 14, 2011; and the Report to Congress on U.S.-India Security Cooperation, U.S. Department of Defense, November 2011.

⁶ Fareed Zakaria, *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*. (New York: Norton Press, 2011), 166.

relationship is managed by both countries will directly impact the geostrategic balance in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

India since Independence

The first 50 years of Indian independence brought significant internal and external national security challenges to the Indian government. Shortly after gaining independence from the British in 1947, India used military force in Hyderabad and Junagadh to consolidate those princely states under one Indian state in 1948.⁷ This use of force exemplified the difficulty in uniting a newly formed, large geographic, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious state. India fought a series of wars with neighboring Pakistan over disputed Kashmir; fought the Chinese in 1962 over Indo-Chinese border disputes; and aided East Pakistan's succession from Pakistan, in turn creating the modern state of Bangladesh in 1971. The Indian nuclear test in 1974 and the eventual proliferation of nuclear weapons to both India and Pakistan in the late 1990s complicated India's national security calculus. This section will examine the seminal national security events in Indian history from independence through 2001, and the leaders who formulated India's courses of action. This examination sheds light on the strategic culture of India; that is, their strategic disposition and the relationship between culture and strategy.⁸ India's historic strategic culture informs current United States policy makers with responsibility for the United States – India strategic relationship.

⁷ Stanley Wolpert, *A New History of India*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 371. For additional information on a historical perspective of India, see: Imtiaz Ahmed, *State and Foreign Policy: India's Role in South Asia* (New Delhi: Vikas, 1993), Stephen Philip Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution: 2001), Gurcharan Das, *India Unbound* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001), Sandy Gordon, *India's Rise to Power in the Twentieth Century and Beyond* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1995), Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), B.M. Jain, *India in the New South Asia: Strategic, Military and Economic Concerns in the Age of Nuclear Diplomacy* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2010), Ashok Kapur, *India—From Regional to World Power* (London: Routledge, 2006), Sunil Khilnani, *India as a Bridging Power* (The Foreign Policy Centre, 2005) and Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (New York: Doubleday, 2007).

⁸ Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking about Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, no. 4 (Spring 1995): 32.

Prior to independence, Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, or *ahimsa*, was very influential in shaping how India perceived itself on the world stage. During World War II, Gandhi did not want the Japanese to be victorious, yet he did not support the Allied war effort either. Based on India's strategic location relative to the Japanese expansion into Burma, the United States helped India fund its own defense industry and production during the war. According to Stephen Cohen, "During World War II, because of its financial and technical support for preparations in India, even the United States had a say in India-related strategic and foreign policy decisions. Gandhi, among others, referred to the 'British-American' strategy for India."⁹ In addition to *ahimsa*, Gandhi's anti-colonialism was an important aspect of the independence movement and was echoed by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was the primary driver of India's foreign and national security policy. Nehru served as India's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister from 1947 to 1964. Nehru believed that ending his country's "backwardness" required borrowing politically and economically from the West. He once privately described himself as "the last Englishman to rule India."¹⁰ Nehru believed in developing a strong economy, which in turn would ensure a strong state. He believed that India's economy should be self-sufficient and was prejudiced against capitalism, which he equated with the slavery of the Indian people.¹¹

Because India was materially weak in 1947 and needed to prioritize its domestic consolidation, Nehru compensated for this weakness by adopting a moralistic form of diplomacy with other countries, rather than one which was backed up by force.¹² Nehru was a Hindu and believed that India could serve as an international example to the other countries of the world as to how a country should carry itself and relate with other countries in the international arena. He was a staunch supporter of secularism and had to

⁹ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 67.

¹⁰ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 84.

¹¹ Shashi Tharoor, *Nehru: The Invention of India* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 2003): 177.

¹² John D. Ciorciari, "India's Approach to Great-Power Status," *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 35, issue 1 (Winter 2011): 69.

resist the pressure from Hindu nationalists to split the state based on religion, like Pakistan.¹³ He was an internationalist in the sense that he believed that more powerful countries would treat economically and militarily weaker countries in a benevolent fashion. Nehru wanted to believe that countries would do the “right” thing and treat weaker neighbors fairly, but he maintained a sense of realism in ensuring India’s national interests.

Nehru traveled extensively in the 1930’s, prior to Indian independence. He visited numerous European countries and the Soviet Union, but never to the United States. Nehru was familiar with the idea of the *chakravarti*; the concept of the classical Hindu leader who protects and orders society and brings order to the world, or guards the state against the chaos and anarchy of the outside world, and is an honored role in the Indian tradition.¹⁴ This concept complimented India’s policy of non-alignment during the Cold War, which was designed to avoid conflict, not prepare for it.

Nehru had a very negative view of soldiers and the military. Nehru described the soldier as, “bred in a different atmosphere, where authority reigns and criticism is not tolerated. So he resents the advice of others, and, when he errs, errs thoroughly and persists in error. For him the chin is more important than the mind or the brain.” He further described the military man who, “stiffening to attention, drops his humanity and, acting as an automaton, shoots and kills inoffensive and harmless persons who have done him no ill.”¹⁵ This view marginalized the advice of Indian military leaders. After the military coup in Pakistan in 1958, he did not trust his military advisors and remained concerned about possible Indian military coups. This marginalization was apparent during Sino-Indian War in 1962, when Nehru and his Defense Minister V.K. Krishna Menon made tactical decisions down to the platoon level during the war. After India’s defeat, Menon was forced to resign, and Nehru’s reputation was damaged. Nehru’s

¹³ Tharoor, *Nehru: The Invention of India*, 167.

¹⁴ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 38.

¹⁵ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 128.

view of the military and the fear of military coups are still relevant today as the current Indian military does not have any significant input regarding the development of national security strategy.

The *ahimsa* philosophy and the concept of *chakravarti* were precursors to India's leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), along with President Nasser in Egypt and Marshall Tito in Yugoslavia. According to C. Raja Mohan, India's role in the NAM diluted whatever ambitions India may have had in assuming the role of the British Raj in the Indian subcontinent.¹⁶ India rationalized its non-engagement in moral terms, although the underlying realist calculation was similar to set forth in George Washington's Farewell Address of September 17, 1796. India also argued that it was so large, important, and democratic, that it need not join an alliance to serve the interests of the West: just maintaining itself as a democratic, status quo power was an adequate justification for putting a claim on the resources of others.¹⁷ This non-alignment policy, coupled with the idea of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, was most applicable to India's initial dealings in the international arena, based on their domestic post-partition struggles. Nehru was not adverse to using force domestically, as demonstrated when he directed military action in Junagadh (1948), Hyderabad (1949) and the Portuguese colony of Goa (1961).¹⁸ Although Nehru was a supporter of Gandhi and his ideology, Nehru's statecraft was much more pragmatic, based on the domestic and geopolitical realities of his time. Nehru assumed much of the onus of developing Indian national security policies. According to Stephen Cohen, Nehru was a one-man planning staff and coordinator, as well as the source of major initiatives that put India on the world's diplomatic map.¹⁹ In contrast, the Indian Parliament, as structured in the Constitution of India, had a very minor role in the shaping and conduct of foreign and defense policy. The President had the nominal title of Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces, but the Prime Minister and cabinet dominated the formation of policy. The

¹⁶ C. Raja Mohan, "India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security," in *Southeast Asian Affairs 2008*, ed. Daljit Singh and Tin Maung Maung Than (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2008): 44.

¹⁷ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 55.

¹⁸ Rashed Uz Zaman, "Kautilya: The Indian Strategic Thinker and Indian Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 25, (2006): 242.

¹⁹ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 69.

Indian Parliament had no role in the declaration of war, did not need to be consulted prior to or during a crisis, nor was their consent necessary to ratify treaties.

What tenets would form a newly independent India's strategic culture? According to A. Z. Hilali, four factors characterized India's strategic thinking, post-partition. The first factor was geography, with India seeing itself as the regionally dominant power, from the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea. The second factor was history and culture, with India having a hierarchical view of the world order, placing itself in the top tier. The third was a rediscovery of Indian history, particularly the empires and statecraft of the Mauryan kings. The fourth characteristic was India's legacy under the British Raj.²⁰

Pratap Bhanu Mehta, the President of the Center for Policy Research in New Delhi, stated that India entered the post-partition world of protracted conflict with three enduring themes or "complexes" which would affect their national security and foreign policy. The first theme was that India would vigorously reassert that South Asia was a zone of Indian pre-eminence. The second theme was that it would be almost impossible to bargain over territory with its neighbors. The third theme was an unfulfilled longing for identity at partition. Mehta suggests that a fear of an enemy, even a manufactured enemy, was necessary immediately after partition, to bind the state together.²¹

Indian political and military leaders and strategic elites were also been influenced by Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, written in 300 B.C., which discussed early forms of Indian foreign policy, based on the concept of *mandala*, or circle of countries, or enemies.²² The *Arthashastra* translates to "The Science of Polity" and is the finest, fullest and most cogently reasoned Sanskrit treatise on the subject of statecraft. The *Arthashastra* is a study in realpolitik as has been compared to Machiavelli's *Prince*.²³ Kautilya served as an advisor to Chandragupta, who laid the foundation for the Mauryan Empire, in what is present

²⁰ A.Z. Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking and its National Security Policy," *Asian Survey* 41, no. 5 (September/October 2001): 740-742.

²¹ Pratap Bhanu Mehta, "Still Under Nehru's Shadow? The Absence of Foreign Policy Framework in India," *India Review* 8, no. 3 (July-September 2009): 216.

²² Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 11.

²³ Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 57.

day northern India. *Mandala* was based on a series of twelve circles, or countries which surrounded the ruler's lands. The circles represented adjacent countries which were characterized as potential allies, enemies or neutral. How to best develop and leverage these "circles" was the role of the leader.

India was defeated by China in the Sino-Indian War of 1962. The Indian military was exposed, and a shift away from the non-alignment policy began. A. Z. Hilali observed that "Nehru's foreign policy based on 'global influence without military power' was shattered and India's position and influence among the new non-aligned nations were also affected."²⁴ Former Indian diplomat Uma Shankar Bajpai wrote in 1983,

Based on this setback, the myth of Indian primacy stood completely shattered. This led to considerable questioning on the part of India's neighbors regarding the reliability of Indian defense guarantees. If India could not protect itself, how could it protect others? The concept of 'sub-continental security' lost its persuasiveness and viability. As a result the sixties witnessed the erosion of India security stakes in the neighboring states.²⁵

With the loss to China in the border clash of 1962, the dominant foreign policy and national security perspective for the next twenty-five years was characterized by Stephen Cohen as "militant Nehruvian" and was best exemplified by Nehru's daughter, Indira Gandhi.²⁶ Jawaharlal Nehru died on May 27, 1964 while still in office. His daughter, Indira Gandhi became Prime Minister on January 15, 1966.²⁷ Indira Gandhi looked to India's borders and saw only threats to the Indian state, not potential opportunities to forge relationships. She was more interested in securing India's borders than she was in projecting Indian power. She was ambivalent towards the United States and did not view the United States as an ally, since the United States had enlisted Pakistan as a member in CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in an effort to contain communism.²⁸

²⁴ Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking," 739.

²⁵ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 59.

²⁶ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 41.

²⁷ Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 397.

²⁸ Wolpert, *A New History of India*, 393.

With an influx of Soviet arms, India defeated Pakistan in 1965. India's success was helped indirectly by the United States arms embargo against Pakistan. In 1971, India supported East Pakistan against Pakistan, with Soviet diplomatic backing, which enabled the creation of Bangladesh.²⁹ The second Indo-Pakistan War of 1971 resulted in what Amit Das Gupta described as almost triggering "an Indo-U.S. war, when [President] Nixon sent the U.S. Seventh Fleet into the Gulf of Bengal in order to prevent the capitulation of Pakistani forces in what was to become Bangladesh, thereby engraving, 'an image of U.S. hostility into the Indian historical memory.'"³⁰ While there was little chance of hostilities breaking out at that time between the United States and India, the event still negatively resonates with Indians who remember the United States presence in the Bay of Bengal.

In 1971, after the establishment of Bangladesh, Indian national security thinkers believed that India needed to maintain a strong indigenous military production capability. They advocated that India should develop their own defense industry, instead of relying on the Soviet Union and others for weapons systems. This view was shared by prominent national security expert K. Subrahmanyam. This opinion was also shared by Indian nuclear scientist A.P. J. Kalam, who advocated that India should not be constrained by the Missile Technology Control Regime, an international treaty regime which prevented India from receiving sensitive defense-related technologies. This sense of Indian military self-reliance was echoed by the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), or "National Service Society." The RSS was a precursor to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In addition to supporting a strong military, the RSS was very culturally driven and exploited differences between ethnic groups and cultures within India. The primary tenet of the RSS was *Hindutva*, or "Hindu-ness". Some in the RSS believe that Indian Muslims were a Pakistani "fifth column". The RSS promoted *Hindutva* for political gain, which was later used successfully by the BJP in the 1990s.

²⁹ Amit Das Gupta, "South Asia," in *From Superpower to Besieged Global Power: Restoring World Order After the Failure of the Bush Doctrine*, ed. Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 102.

³⁰ Das Gupta, "South Asia," 103.

In 1975 the Indian Government appointed an expert committee to develop a twenty year prospective plan for the improvement of India's military capabilities and potential to develop into a major power.³¹ Pakistan and China were seen as the primary threats to the state, and the committee recommended a force structure that would be capable of deterring both enemies. The committee also advised that the primary goal of the Indian Army would be the prevention of war with as small of an investment as possible. In 1987, Indian Army Chief of Staff Krishnaswamy Sundarji produced a report called "Army 2000-2010." The plan focused on land based forces and called for India to increase the number of Army divisions from 34 to 45, and to field a Soviet produced theater missile defense system to counter Pakistan's missile capability.³²

While determining the proper size and structure of the Indian armed forces was important, India also needed to improve its internal processes to ensure Indian policy makers received adequate information. After the Kashmir crisis and near-war with Pakistan in 1991, reforms were put into place in an attempt to provide better information to decision makers. In 1992, the Prime Minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao instituted several parliamentary reforms to include multiparty parliamentary standing committees. These committees were organized by subject and included both opposition and government members of Parliament, and were chaired by the senior opposition member. These committees and their publications resemble the Armed Services committees of the United States Congress. The committees provide the opposition with an entry into foreign policy and national security debates.³³

The fall of the Soviet Union marked a significant turning point in how India viewed itself on the world stage, and also how India's South Asian neighbors viewed India. With the emergence of a unipolar world, India's neighbors no longer associated India with the Soviet Union, which provided India opportunities for outreach in the region which were previously very difficult to pursue. The non-aligned

³¹ Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking," 752.

³² Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking," 753.

³³ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 70.

movement became less relevant. India began to think about taking a more active political and security role in the region. Indian national security strategic thinkers envisioned an area of Indian influence from the Gulf of Aden to the Straits of Malacca. These Indian strategic thinkers began to think about the challenges of a post-Cold War world for India; to include how to build a strong economic base capable of sustaining military growth and how to develop a larger and more influential diplomatic profile.

From the defense procurement prospective, India began to look in earnest to other defense suppliers such as France, Israel and the United States. Russian equipment, with its relative lack of sophistication, no longer met India's long term procurement plans, particularly after the demonstrated success of "smart bomb" technology in Operation Desert Storm. India's dependence on primarily Russian equipment during the 1980s eventually led to a logistical nightmare for the Indian military in trying to obtain spare and repair parts, along with the requisite maintenance expertise.

The end of the Cold War also affected how India was viewed by its neighbors. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) began to look at India in a different light as India's relationship with Russia became less closely tied.³⁴ During the 1980s, many of the ASEAN nations did not fully trust India's expanding naval presence in the Indian Ocean, based on India's relationship with the Soviet Union. In the 1990s, no longer perceptually tied to the Soviet Union, the Indian Navy increased its bilateral and multilateral operations in the region, culminating in the 2004 tsunami humanitarian relief operations with a number of countries in the region, in addition to Japan, Australia and the United States.

Since the 1990s, India's armed forces have become increasingly ambitious, talking of their own revolution in military affairs. India is broadening its strategic horizons and its military acquisition is seeing a marked shift from conventional land-based systems to means of power projection such as airborne refueling systems and long-range missiles. India is setting up bases abroad, patrolling the Indian

³⁴ ASEAN is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. ASEAN was established on August 8, 1967. ASEAN is currently composed of the following countries: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Ocean to counter piracy and protecting crucial sea-lanes of communication. They are demonstrating a military assertiveness which they had previously not shown.³⁵

The nuclear capability of both Pakistan and India further complicated an already complex and extremely volatile region, with the ongoing dispute in Kashmir and the Indian perception during the 1980's that the United States supported Pakistan over India, in part because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Obtaining a nuclear capability brought about a whole new array of national security strategy issues and questions for Indian decision makers. A.Z. Hilali observed, "In a post Cold War world and after the nuclear tests by Pakistan and India in 1998, some observers are of the opinion that India is not yet clear about its future role and its leadership, diplomats, and industrialists have yet to evolve a consciousness about their place in a unipolar world."³⁶ There was another reason for India's pursuit of nuclear weapons. The Indian nuclear bomb provided a deterrence against its nuclear neighbors, Pakistan and China, and was seen as the entrance ticket into the club of the great powers.³⁷

On May 11, 1998 Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee authorized five nuclear tests at Pokharan in the Rajasthan Desert in response to a long-range missile test by Pakistan. In response to these Indian tests, Pakistan conducted its own test and according to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, "the two countries became linked as the poster children for crimes against the non-proliferation regime."³⁸ Indian policy makers saw nuclear weapons as a passport to the recognition and prestige India had been seeking.³⁹ Former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee wrote in 2000, "Of the states in the world, India's security is central to Asia's security and stability, and American and other observers have to acknowledge both India's peaceful intentions and its right to possess weapons of mass destruction, which would be used

³⁵ Harsh V. Pant, "India Defense Policy at a Crossroads," *Asia-Pacific Review* 17, no. 1 (2010): 128.

³⁶ Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking," 763.

³⁷ Das Gupta, "South Asia," 108.

³⁸ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 2011): 436.

³⁹ Hilali, "India's Strategic Thinking," 758.

responsibly by India.”⁴⁰ It would take seven more years until the United States would formally recognize India’s nuclear capability.

For some Indian policy makers, the feeling that the United States favored Pakistan in the 1980’s carried through to the 1990’s. The feeling in the 1980s was in response to the United States influx of weapons through Pakistan to support the mujahidin in their fight against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. With the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the end of the Cold War, the early 1990s brought another reason for Indian mistrust of American motives in the region. India resented United States and China efforts in the 1990’s to make Pakistan a local counterweight and in turn, India greatly expanded and modernized its land, sea and air forces, and even developed nuclear weapons, in its effort to thwart a balancing strategy aimed against its position in South Asia.⁴¹ India’s perception of the United States began to change with President Clinton’s visit to India in 2000, the importance of which will be discussed later in the paper.

As India enters the twenty-first century, they do so as one of the oldest and culturally rich civilizations in history. The description of Indians by the eleventh-century Muslim scholar-traveler Alberuni may still describe the opinion of Indian diplomats today: “The Indians believe that there is no country but theirs, no nation like theirs, no king like theirs, no religion like theirs, no science like theirs.”⁴² India also has a rich religious history, as the geographic birthplace of four of the world’s major religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. This sense of cultural accomplishment directly affects India’s foreign and national security policy. Stephen Cohen describes this sense of identity: “Believing that India should be accorded deference and respect because of its intrinsic civilizational qualities, many Indian diplomats and strategists are wary of having to depend upon states that do not

⁴⁰ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 47.

⁴¹ Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking,” 747.

⁴² Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 51.

appreciate India's special and unique characteristics."⁴³ The next section examines contemporary India, using the events of September 11, 2001 and the new Bush Administration as the beginning of a United States – India rapprochement.

Contemporary India

As the 20th century came to a close with the fall of the Soviet Union, the 21st century was ushered in with the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001. In the aftermath of the attacks, the United States conducted an international roll call of allies or adversaries on the Global War on Terror, and India offered its assistance to the United States. Indian warships escorted United States naval warships through the Straits of Malacca in 2002, and although largely a symbolic gesture, it was a very important step for Indian national security strategic policy makers. India saw a potential opportunity. Some Indian strategists believe that the United States may allow India to play a role as a relatively autonomous regional power in the Pacific Rim and South Asia because, since the Afghanistan crisis the United States has given low priority to the South Asian region. These Indian experts believe the United States might reduce its military strength in the Pacific area and delegate partial responsibility to India to control the Indian Ocean.⁴⁴

With the beginning of the 21st century, India has begun to look in earnest at how they will view naval power projection and land-based “expeditionary” forces. India is no longer solely concerned about its territorial borders but is looking at its “extended neighborhood.” This change in view has evolved partially as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union, but more importantly from the high growth rate of the Indian economy. India realized that in order to safeguard its access to raw materials and markets, it must have the capability to protect that access. Rahul Bedi observed in 2008, “India has begun inducting power-projection platforms, such as aircraft carriers, nuclear powered submarines, long range combat aircraft with mid-air refueling capability and landing platform dock ships for expeditionary warfare and

⁴³ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 52.

⁴⁴ Hilali, “India's Strategic Thinking,” 762.

humanitarian missions and is also developing a intercontinental ballistic missile with a strike range in excess of 5,000 km – all with the collective aim of influencing events far from home.”⁴⁵ India’s intent to build up its expeditionary and naval capability is a considerable shift away from the Non-Aligned Movement.

Since 2005, all three of India’s military branches have articulated the need to operate beyond India’s borders. The Chief of Army Staff General Deepak Kapoor argued that “in keeping with our growing regional aspirations,” the Army needed to develop the capability to deploy ground forces for an out of area operation. At a 2009 infantry commander’s conference, the Army’s senior leadership explored the idea of transforming into an “expeditionary force,” capable of responding to an overseas contingency on short notice. The Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshall F.H. Major argued that Indian air power needs “a strategic reach to safeguard our national interests,” which requires a “long-range presence, persistence and ‘forward-basing arrangements.’”⁴⁶

Not to be outdone, the Indian Navy also articulated the need for a power projection capability, which has been well received by the Indian government, based on Indian Ministry of Defense appropriations. The 2004 *Indian Maritime Doctrine* identified the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca as “a legitimate area of interest ...for the first quarter of the 21st century.” The doctrinal document goes on to state that “whatever happens in the [Indian Ocean littoral region] can affect our national security and is of interest to us.”⁴⁷ The Indian Navy leaders articulated the need for a more robust naval force, capable of operating jointly with the other service branches. In 2008, then-Chief of

⁴⁵ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1163. A number of works deal with current appraisals of the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean: Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), Richard Hall, *Empires of the Monsoon: A History of the Indian Ocean and Its Invaders* (London: Harper Collins, 1996), Selig S. Harrison and K. Subrahmanyam, eds. *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), and Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York, New York: Random House, 2010).

⁴⁶ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1177-1179.

⁴⁷ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1170.

Naval Staff Admiral Sureesh Mehta foresaw that the Navy of 2020 would be “capable of influencing the outcome of land battles and performing a constabulary role in the Indian Ocean region.”⁴⁸ India is the only country on the Indian Ocean that has strategic interest in that body of water’s choke points: the Red Sea and Straits of Hormuz, the Madagascar region to the east of Africa, and the Malacca Strait in Asia.⁴⁹

The Indian Navy is the most tangible manifestation of Indian power projection in South Asia. However, the Navy is currently at a crossroads between their vision for the first quarter of the 21st century and their current capability. Indian naval experts argue that the country’s maritime interest and defense require a large and powerful navy, not only to protect their interests, but because a great nation should naturally have a great navy.⁵⁰ Of the Indian Navy’s current 57 surface combatants, five of the eight destroyers and seven of the eleven frigates are approaching the end of their service life. They also face a shortage of auxiliary ships and minesweepers.⁵¹ In addition, amphibious capability is an important part of power projection, especially relevant in the Indian littoral. India’s goal of having the amphibious lift capability for 10,000 troops is a long way from fruition. India only has amphibious lift capability for 3,000 troops, all of which is contingent on the INS *Jalashva*, formerly the USS *Trenton*. India also does not have any experience in conducting an amphibious assault against a determined enemy.⁵²

What has driven this increased focus on developing increased Indian naval presence and capability? Two uniquely American sources have contributed to Indian strategic cultural thought regarding the navy’s role in ensuring India’s national and economic security: the tenets set forth in the Monroe Doctrine and its corollaries, originally introduced in 1823; and the writings of United States Navy Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, especially *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* written in 1890. How Indian national security strategic thinkers and policy makers over time have

⁴⁸ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1174.

⁴⁹ Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking,” 755.

⁵⁰ Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking,” 755.

⁵¹ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1176.

⁵² Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1180.

interpreted these two sources with regard to Indian policy direction is instructive and may be partially predictive of future Indian courses of action.

Two of India's most seminal thinkers on the role of Indian sea power, Kavalam Panikkar and Keshav Vaidya, were both influenced by Mahan's writings. Panikkar stressed the importance of the Indian Ocean in his 1945 book *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*, the title clearly a nod to Mahan's work. Panikkar applied Mahan's concept of sea power to India, advocated a "blue water" navy and creating a "steel ring" around India, from Singapore to the east, Socotra to the west, and the Mauritius Islands to the south. Panikkar stated that "While to other countries, the Indian Ocean is only one of the important oceanic areas, to India it is the vital sea... The Indian Ocean must therefore remain truly Indian."⁵³ As of 2005, newly commissioned Indian naval officers still studied Panikkar and his works.

In 1949, Keshav Vaidya wrote *The Naval Defence of India*, where he acknowledged Mahan as an inspiration for his book. He advocated that the "Indian Ocean must become a Indian Lake. That is to say India must be the supreme and undisputed power over the waters of the Indian Ocean...controlling the waves of the vast mass of water making the Indian Ocean and its two main offshoots, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal."⁵⁴ Mahan was and continues to be frequently evoked by those who wished to emphasize the importance of the Indian Ocean, and the importance of the Indian Navy. The ideas espoused by both Panikkar and Viadya were not fully embraced by the Indian government until the BJP government of 1998.

In 2004, the BJP-led coalition government released the *Indian Maritime Doctrine*. It discussed and advocated for a "maritime destiny," talked of "maritime vision," and set the benchmark for India's "Mahanian vision."⁵⁵ Also in 2004, then-Chief of Naval Staff Arun Prakash further stressed the role of

⁵³ David Scott, "India's 'Grand Strategy' for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions," *Asia-Pacific Review*, Volume 13, No. 2, 2006: 100.

⁵⁴ Scott, "India's 'Grand Strategy' for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions," 100.

⁵⁵ Scott, "India's 'Grand Strategy' for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions," 112.

“maritime diplomacy,” combined with “our robust presence in the region,” and “a strong deterrent posture.” He went on to add that “India’s growing international stature gives it strategic relevance in the area ranging from the Persian Gulf to the Strait of Malacca.”⁵⁶ In his 2005 book *The 21st Century Is Going to Be a Maritime Century*, service bias notwithstanding, Prakash advised that India needed to look more seaward than inwards, which would be critical to the decision-making, or “Grand-Strategic Level” of security planning. During his tenure, Prakash saw the Navy’s portion of the overall Indian defense budget rise to 17%, the highest it had been until that time.⁵⁷

India’s use of terms such as “maritime destiny,” “maritime vision,” and “maritime diplomacy” leads to another American source which has contributed to Indian strategic cultural thought and India’s view of its role in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR); the Monroe Doctrine, which was introduced by President Monroe in 1823, and its associated corollaries. According to James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara of the United States Naval War College, the 19th century provided an unlikely source for lessons to inform Indians’ efforts to amass maritime power, but references to the Monroe Doctrine are not uncommon in New Delhi.⁵⁸ Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru referenced Monroe Doctrine themes in his speech justifying India’s forceful expulsion of the Portuguese from Goa. He stated,

I submit that...the Portuguese retention of Goa is a continuing interference with the political system established in India today. I shall go a step further and say that any interference by any other power would also be an interference with the political system of India today....It may be that we are weak and we cannot prevent that interference. But the fact is that any attempt by a foreign power to interfere in any way with India is a thing which India cannot tolerate, and which, subject to her strength, she will oppose. That is the broad doctrine I lay down.⁵⁹

While 19th century American history may be an unlikely source of current Indian national security policy, there are similarities between the newly independent India, and the United States during President Monroe’s tenure. President Monroe set out his doctrine during his 1823 message on the state of the

⁵⁶ Scott, “India’s ‘Grand Strategy’ for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions,” 115.

⁵⁷ Scott, “India’s ‘Grand Strategy’ for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions,” 115.

⁵⁸ James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider? India’s ‘Monroe Doctrine’ and Indian Naval Strategy,” *Comparative Strategy*, Volume 28, 2009: 334.

⁵⁹ Holmes and Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider?” 334.

union. America had been a “free-rider” on the security provided by a dominant British navy, just as Indian has enjoyed the security provided by the United States 7th Fleet. The United States had not yet developed into an economic power, just as India was not yet economically developed at the time of Nehru’s message. Monroe was addressing the encroachment of European powers in the Western Hemisphere, while Nehru was establishing India’s right of self-determination, without foreign interference. Neither leader asked for permission from any international body, nor had the military capability initially to enforce their statements. According to Holmes and Yoshihara, the term “Indian Monroe Doctrine” has entered into the lexicon of Indian strategic thinkers.⁶⁰ C. Raja Mohan, an Indian national security author and pundit, regularly uses the term and stated that, “This Indian variation of the Monroe Doctrine, involving spheres of influence, has not been entirely successful in the past, but it has been an article of faith for many in the Indian strategic community.”⁶¹

In the 2007 *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy* foreword, the Indian Chief of Naval Staff wrote,

This is turn will allow India to take its rightful place in the comity of nations and attain its manifest destiny....We do not harbor any extra-territorial ambitions, but aim to safeguard our vital national interests. Therefore...our primary maritime military interest is to ensure national security, provide insulation from external interference, so that the vital tasks of fostering economic growth and undertaking developmental activities, can take place in a secure environment.⁶²

The central element of India’s security culture is the belief that, while other states may resist, India is destined to play the dominant role in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Some Indian leaders believe that India’s manifest destiny is to be not only a regional hegemon but a global power as well.⁶³

⁶⁰ Holmes and Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider?” 336.

⁶¹ Holmes and Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider?” 336.

⁶² Holmes and Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider?” 333. Originally from *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy*, New Delhi, India: Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), May 28, 2007), iii.

⁶³ Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking,” 740.

How India interprets their version of the “Nehru Doctrine” or the “Indian Monroe Doctrine” will be vitally important in the decades to come. Will India be willing to collaborate with other navies in the Indian Ocean, or will they view the Indian Ocean as an “Indian Lake?” Or will they just bide time until they can increase the capabilities of their navy? Holmes and Yoshishara conclude that “now is an auspicious time for the United States to work toward a durable seagoing partnership with India – much as Great Britain negotiated a rapprochement with a rising America a century ago.”⁶⁴

Since the end of the Cold War, India has taken a more active role in developing bilateral relations with its Southeast Asian neighbors. In 1993, India signed a Memorandum of Agreement on defense cooperation with Malaysia. In 2003, India signed a bilateral defense cooperation agreement with Singapore, and the Indian Navy has since made frequent port calls in Singapore. Then Indian Minister of External Affairs Sinha observed in 2003 that:

The ‘Look East’ policy began the move away from exclusive focus on economic issues in phase one to a broader agenda that involves security cooperation, including joint operations to protect sea lanes and pooling of resources in the war against terror. The military contacts and joint exercises that India launched with ASEAN states on a low-key basis in the early 1990s are now expanding into full fledged cooperation.⁶⁵

ASEAN’s decision to invite India to participate in the East Asia Summit in 2005, despite objections from China, was an important step for the region in recognizing India’s growing capability as a regional security partner. It also signaled recognition from ASEAN that India was no longer linked to the old Soviet Cold War model. This recognition of India as an emerging region partner was echoed by Singapore Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong in 2005:

With India’s rise it will be increasingly less tenable to regard South Asia and East Asia as distinct strategic theatres interacting only at the margins. United States-China-Japan relations will still be important, but a new grand strategy triangle of United States-China-India relations will be superimposed upon it ... Reconceptualising East Asia holistically is of strategic imperative ... It would be shortsighted and self-defeating for ASEAN to choose a direction that cuts itself off from a dynamic India.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ Holmes and Yoshihara, “Strongman, Constable, or Free-Rider?” 345.

⁶⁵ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 47.

⁶⁶ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 50.

In 2005, India and Indonesia signed a framework agreement of strategic partnership and in 2006 signed a defense cooperation agreement. In July 2007, the Indian and Vietnamese Prime Ministers issued a joint declaration which recognized, “the important role that India and Vietnam are called upon to play in the promotion of regional security, the two leaders welcomed the steady development of bilateral defense and security ties between the two countries and pledged themselves to strengthen cooperation in defence supplies, joint projects, training cooperation and intelligence exchanges.”⁶⁷ In February 2008, India convened the Indian Ocean Naval Conclave, inviting the littoral nations on the Indian Ocean, from South Africa to Australia. India did not invite any other countries to participate in the conclave. According to C. Raja Mohan, “That the navies of the United States, China and Japan were not invited is explained by Indian officials in terms of geography, but there is no mistaking the enduring intent of India to affirm its own independent engagement of the Indian Ocean littoral.”⁶⁸

As India reached out to its neighbors in the IOR and established security agreements, it faced a devastating terror attack at home, originating in Pakistan. The public outcry after the Mumbai terrorist attacks in November 2008 was a watershed moment for Indian national security professionals. Initially, the Indian government considered a military option against Pakistan, whom India believed had at least tacitly approved the attacks. Indian officials soon learned that India no longer had the capacity of imposing quick and effective retribution on Pakistan and that India no longer enjoyed the kind of conventional superiority vis-à-vis its regional adversary that it had enjoyed for the past five decades.⁶⁹

How a country views itself strategically in the world is influenced by how its own military is viewed in the citizens of that country, and the state of the civil-military affairs. How does the Indian military view the current state of the Indian civil-military relationship? The Indian military realizes that

⁶⁷ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 49.

⁶⁸ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 48.

⁶⁹ Pant, “India Defense Policy at a Crossroads,” 124.

the nature of civil-military relations in India's two immediate neighbors, Pakistan and Bangladesh, have been less than stellar. The Indian military does not have sufficient confidence in the politicians nor the Indian civil servants to have the requisite expertise and knowledge to make informed defense and national security decisions. In contrast, Indian politicians and bureaucrats are afraid that Indian generals might catch the "coup virus" from their Pakistani counterparts. According to Stephen Cohen, there is no more politically sensitive issue for the core civilian strategic elite.⁷⁰

Indian political leadership is extremely wary of any military to military engagement, especially with the United States. Even the most minor contacts are controlled and scrutinized. Despite civilian concerns, the Indian military remains loyal to the government. According to former United Nations diplomat Shashi Tharoor, in 1996, the former Orissa chief minister Biju Patniak called for the Indian Army to take over the country, amid a series of government scandals. Tharoor commented:

The Army leaders were unanimous in their embarrassed rejection of such a suggestion. It was not surprising that they disclaimed any interest in taking on the running of the country; like all true professionals, they only wish to do what they are trained to do well. But equally important, getting involved in governance would only ruin one of the few institutions in the country that has not yet been besmirched by the prevailing mores.⁷¹

This lack of mutual trust between the military and civilian leadership poses a number of challenges. The first and most significant challenge is the military's inability and difficulty in conducting meaningful long range planning, to include strategies, weapons systems and force structure. This challenge is primarily caused by the frequent change-over of civilian coalition governments. There is a defense planning staff, but it serves under the Indian Army Staff, and has nominal power or control over the other service branches. In 2001, the Indian government created a fourth service "Chief", similar to the United States Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to provide for genuine interservice coordination and provide expert, integrated military advice to the political leadership.⁷² In addition, the Ministry of External

⁷⁰ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 77.

⁷¹ Shashi Tharoor, *India: From Midnight to the Millennium* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1997): 338.

⁷² Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 79.

Affairs does not have the expertise to integrate military capabilities into complex national security strategic decisions. There are also very few high level Indian bureaucrats or politicians with former Indian military experience. Although they have limited military experience, they are still competent, free of corruption and pride themselves on their social status, bureaucratic control, and policy influence, not their material wealth.⁷³

The marginalization of the military and the general feeling of mistrust between both the civilian and military have direct national security policy ramifications. Harsh V. Pant observed, “A defining feature of any state is its ability to make war and keep peace. And yet over the years war has been systematically factored out of Indian foreign policy and the national security matrix, calling into question India’s ability to prevail in major wars of the future.”⁷⁴ The military plays virtually no role in the national security decision making process. Military factors, such as hardware or strategy are considered, but the military leaders’ advice is detached from political or strategic decisions.⁷⁵ The marginalization of the military in the formation of national security strategies is a legacy of Gandhi and Nehru, and it remains to be seen when this may change.

The Indian military establishment is severely hamstrung by a slow bureaucratic weapons acquisition process. Some of the roots of this difficult bureaucratic maze of issues derived from the Bofors artillery scandal in the late 1980s, which involved Indian officials accepting large bribes, and little military hardware as a result. There is also an institutional lack of risk-taking associated with Indian weapons acquisition, from both the political and military leaders alike.

The Indian armed forces have regularly returned unspent money earmarked for capital improvements to the Finance Ministry, because they could not effectively and efficiently spend the money. This is a trend that the Indian military must reverse to keep pace with its regional adversaries.

⁷³ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 71.

⁷⁴ Pant, “India Defense Policy at a Crossroads,” 135.

⁷⁵ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 77.

India's bureaucratic procedures are the root causes of persistent defense scandals and they need immediate simplification. Political vindictiveness and risk-averse bureaucracy ensured that while Pakistan rapidly acquired United States technology over the past eight years under the garb of fighting the 'war on terror,' the modernization of the Indian army has slipped behind a decade.⁷⁶

The United States and many western European nations stand ready to supply India with a wide variety of weapons systems. India is expected to make more than \$35 billion (US) in arms purchases from 2009 through 2013, although India needs to streamline its defense acquisition process to facilitate those purchases.⁷⁷ "The debate on Indian defense policy tends not to go beyond increasing defense expenditure and big-ticket military acquisitions. There have been no long-term strategic review of India's security environment and no overall defense strategy has been articulated," according to Harsh Pant.⁷⁸ Certainly, much of India's ability to upgrade its military capability is based on the emergence and success of its economy. It may be difficult to sometimes discern the underlying reasons for India's acquisition of power projection forces. According to Amit Das Gupta, "Summing up current Indian strategy, one can see heavy investments in armaments, armaments that are meant more to boost the country's status than to satisfy immediate security needs. On the other hand, India understands that it has made its way toward great-power status by successful economic development."⁷⁹

A generational shift is now taking place in India. Ideological followers of Nehru are no longer in positions of influence, and those in positions to influence policy have no first-hand knowledge of India's defeat in 1962 or victory in 1971.⁸⁰ They have little direct contact with Pakistanis, and little knowledge of Pakistan, except the 1999 conflict in Kargil; India's first televised war, when Pakistan was depicted to

⁷⁶ Pant, "India Defense Policy at a Crossroads," 138.

⁷⁷ Pant, "India Defense Policy at a Crossroads," 125.

⁷⁸ Pant, "India Defense Policy at a Crossroads," 141.

⁷⁹ Das Gupta, "South Asia," 110.

⁸⁰ The author participated in a roundtable at the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Hawaii on February 23, 2012, where the idea of this generational shift and the relatively young demographic of the current Indian society was discussed.

the Indian nation as a “traitorous, duplicitous adversary.”⁸¹ Besides a generational shift, India is also experiencing a regional internal shift. Indian foreign and national security has traditionally been very Delhi-centric. With the emergence of India’s information technology industry in the south and west, this dynamic is beginning to change. The Indian public is interested in these national security issues and decisions. All of the major Indian television channels have programs which feature experts and other “talking heads” who comment on foreign policy and national security issues. There are also Indian think tanks, retired senior military personnel, diplomats, academics, journalists and former politicians who regularly debate the merit and direction of Indian foreign and national security policy. Most of this debate is centered in New Delhi, and a few other major cities.

One issue that has bothered India’s strategic elites for the last twenty years is India’s exclusion as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. Since the 1990’s, India has desired a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, with full veto rights. This request continues to be strengthened by India’s growing economy and nuclear arsenal.⁸² Gaining a permanent seat on the Security Council is not a panacea, as Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan observe, “While the UN Security Council seat is important for India, New Delhi is under no illusion that it will change everything. Like the Bush Administration and unlike the Europeans, India is wary of giving too much say to the UN in the management of global security, seeking instead to transform the global security order.”⁸³ In his 2003 book *Nehru: The Inventor of India*, United Nations diplomat and author Shashi Tharoor wrote that, in 1952, Prime Minister Nehru refused a United States overture that India take over the permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council then held by Taiwan. Instead, Nehru suggested that the seat be given to China.⁸⁴ There is little doubt that in hindsight, India would most likely come to another answer based

⁸¹ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 50.

⁸² Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 104.

⁸³ Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan, “Getting India Right,” *Policy Review*, Number 135, February/March 2006: 60.

⁸⁴ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 165.

on their situation today. The current composition of the UN Security Council represents the victors of a war that ended sixty years ago.

India claims that it deserves a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, basing the case upon its intrinsic importance as accounting for “one fifth of the world,” plus its active role in a number of United Nations peacekeeping operations.⁸⁵ Lionel Beehner suggests expanding the permanent five members of the Security Council to five more members with veto powers – presumably Germany, Japan, India, Brazil and South Africa – but require that a resolution can be blocked only by two votes rather than one. This plan, which Yale historian Paul Kennedy describes as ‘both desperate and ingenious’ in his book *The Parliament of Man*, would make the council more representative of the actual balance of power, enhance its legitimacy and require greater coalition building.”⁸⁶ Beehner adds that nearly all of the states shortlisted for United Nations Security Council membership are democracies whose interests often align with the United States’, and that India’s membership would provide a useful check against China’s rise.⁸⁷

As India enters the 21st century, whether a permanent member of the Security Council or not, they face a rising China, which is beginning to expand with its “blue water” navy into the Indian Ocean region. While both the United States and India try to determine what China’s true ambitions and intentions are in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, all three are significant trading partners, with bilateral trade between China and India exceeding \$60 billion U.S. in 2010. India is increasingly uncomfortable with China’s frequent naval presence in the IOR, to include China’s anti-piracy operations off the Horn of Africa.

In describing India’s current and future relations with China, C. Raja Mohan advised, “The Sino-Indian relationship is likely to see enduring elements of both rivalry and cooperation. The challenge before Beijing and New Delhi is to continuously expand their cooperation and develop a better mutual

⁸⁵ Hilali, “India’s Strategic Thinking,” 758.

⁸⁶ Lionel Beehner, “Remake the U.N. Security Council,” *USA Today*, February 16, 2012.

⁸⁷ Lionel Beehner, “Remake the U.N. Security Council,” *USA Today*, February 16, 2012.

understanding and prevent any potential misreading of each other's intentions. Beijing's real concerns might have less to do with what India does in Southeast Asia than the prospects of New Delhi joining Washington in an alliance to contain China."⁸⁸ This Chinese perception is not lost on the Indian government. India is determined to maintain its independent identity, and does not want to be too closely identified with the United States in the region. Some Indian experts believe the record of India's foreign policy and its reluctance to accept the dictates of other great powers suggests that India will never sacrifice its freedom of foreign policy action in favor of any formal alliance with the United States.⁸⁹

Currently there is a debate in India among national security professionals, military leaders and the strategic elite over India's role in the coming century. As India strengthens its military capability, how will that military power be implemented, and under what strategic framework? Will there be a national strategy that will drive India's actions not only in the Indian Ocean region, but in the Pacific and the world? Non-alignment seems to be disappearing in the rearview mirror as India moves forward, but that does not mean India will sign on to any multilateral security arrangements any time soon. Contemporary Indian analysts argue that the central strategic problem facing India goes back at least two thousand years: how to achieve the strategic unity of the Subcontinent and protect it from the incursions of outside powers.⁹⁰ How India will address this strategic problem, while dealing with an expanding China will be India's challenge in the immediate future.

From the Indian perspective, the ideal world would consist of many great powers, each dominant in its own region, and with a focus on their own region. From the perspective of its smaller regional neighbors, with the notable exception of Pakistan, India is already a superpower. For the Indian Ocean region, India projects its cultural and economic power on its neighbors more strongly than any American,

⁸⁸ Mohan, "India's Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security," 52.

⁸⁹ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 129.

⁹⁰ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 10.

Chinese or European power.⁹¹ While New Delhi may not currently have the global interests of a superpower, as a rising regional hegemon, it would not be surprising for India to seek sufficient military capability to retain foreign policy autonomy, or prevent the emergence of a power vacuum in a neighboring state.⁹² Robert Kaplan describes a power paradigm in the Indian Ocean which he calls “neo-Curzonism”:

Neo-Curzonism is a tendency among those Indian strategic thinkers who anticipate continued economic growth in their country, and a foreign policy that should follow from it. It might be tempting to compare it to American neoconservatism. After all, it is an imperial-like vision that desires national greatness based on big ideas. But whereas neoconservatives seek to impose America’s ideals and system of governance of abroad, neo-Curzonians are content with alliances with nondemocratic systems different from India’s own. Neo-Curzonians understand limits. They seek a return to Indian preeminence mainly within India’s geographic sphere of influence. . . . With the unleashing of Indian capitalism in a globalized framework, neo-Curzonians have sought to define a new ‘forward’ strategy for India that concentrates more specifically on Asia and the Indian Ocean, rather than on the world per se.⁹³

How India interprets their role, whether as a regional hegemon and security provider, or as a world power with military power projection capability, will directly affect the security calculations of the United States, China, and India’s immediate neighbors in the region. Perhaps Rahul Gandhi, the General Secretary of the Indian National Congress Party framed the impact of this decision when he said, “We stop being scared about how the world will impact us, and we step out and worry about how we will impact the world.”⁹⁴

United States national security interests in the Indian Ocean

This paper has thus far focused on India’s perspective and how they see their role in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. It is important to understand the United States’ perspective from Indian independence to present. How has the United States perceived India’s national security policy, from the Non-Aligned Movement; tilting towards the Soviet Union during the Cold War; their nuclear weapons

⁹¹ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 32.

⁹² Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1183.

⁹³ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 183.

⁹⁴ Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection,” 1183.

testing in 1998, and India's emergence as an economic power? According to Stephen Cohen, looking at the relationship between the two countries is difficult, since American policymakers tend to see India in terms of a blur of favorable and unfavorable stereo-types, whether it is the poverty depicted in the Hollywood film "Slumdog Millionaire" or India's contentious relationship with Pakistan. The United States needs to move beyond these stereotypes to arrive at a "net assessment" of major factors.⁹⁵

The United States' relationship with India after World War II was certainly affected by India's non-alignment policy. India viewed the United States as an extension of British colonialism. India was busy consolidating its domestic authority, while the United States was focused on the containment of the Soviet Union and communism, to include Communist China. In addition, because India had not yet developed a modern economy, India became relegated towards the bottom of the United States' geo-strategic priority list. R. Nicholas Burns, the lead United States negotiator for the United States-Indian Civil Agreement in 2006 described this period: "U.S.-India relations during the postwar period consisted of missed opportunities...As is so often the case with proud and great countries, this rather bitter history overwhelmed efforts to mend fences and postponed the long-desired partnership between India and the United States."⁹⁶

When India gained its independence in 1947, most of the Washington, D.C. foreign policy and national security establishment was focused on Europe. With the common threat of the Soviet Union and the need to rebuild the shattered European economies after the defeat of the Axis powers, United States policy makers focused on Europe. The European focus was also based on a number of factors, which included the mostly European backgrounds of United States policy makers, and their perceptions of and

⁹⁵ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 5.

⁹⁶ R. Nicholas Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity with India; The New U.S.-India Partnership," *Foreign Affairs*, (New York: Nov/Dec 2007, Volume 86, Issue 6; 131. The following sources address U.S.-India relations: Lloyd I. Rudolph and Susanne Hoeber Rudolph, eds. *Making U.S. Foreign Policy toward South Asia: Regional Imperatives and the Imperial Presidency* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2008), Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan. "Getting India Right," *Policy Review* 135 (February/March 2006), Evan A. Feigenbaum, "India's Rise, America's Interest," *Foreign Affairs* 89, no. 2 (March-April 2010), and Ashley J. Tellis, "The Merits of Dehyphenation: Explaining U.S. Success in Engaging India and Pakistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 31, no. 4 (2008).

possible racism towards the Asian societies following the war.⁹⁷ The United States' focus in Asia was on the reconstruction of Japan, with little emphasis on Southeast or South Asia. At the conclusion of World War II, there was no regional power in Asia which represented a credible, capable military threat.

Shortly after Indian independence, the United States did not support India in 1948 independence during the dispute in Kashmir. The creation of the Southeast Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) in 1954 further strained the United States' relationship with India. The United States initiated the creation of SEATO, which included Thailand, the Philippines, Australia, New Zealand, France, Great Britain, Pakistan and the United States, but SEATO was by no means an "Asian NATO." United States policy makers realized the two organizations were very different. As one member of the U.S. State Department wrote to Secretary of State John Foster Dulles,

In accordance with your suggestion...we have attempted to get away from the designation 'SEATO' so as to avoid fostering the idea that an organization is envisioned for SEA [Southeast Asia] and the Pacific similar to NATO....In spite of our efforts, the designation 'SEATO' has stuck....*I suggest that we discussions that so far as the U.S. is concerned, the SEA Pact is not conceived as a parallel to NATO* (emphasis in original).⁹⁸

The inclusion of Pakistan in SEATO did not help Indo-United States relations, although India would not have joined such an organization in the first place, based on their policy of non-alignment. Even within the SEATO construct, United States relationships in the region were and continue to be more bilateral in nature than multilateral like the relationship with NATO member states.

After India's embarrassing defeat in 1962 to the Chinese along the Indo-Chinese border, the United States provided arms to India, but was perceived by India to be in such a small amount, that the aid turned out to negatively influence Indo-United States relations. This relationship was further

⁹⁷ Hemmer, Christopher and Katzenstein, Peter J. "Why is There No NATO in Asia? Collective Identity, Regionalism, and the Origins of Multilateralism," *International Organization*, Volume 56, No. 3, Summer 2002: 579. Hemmer and Katzenstein examine a number of factors which shaped U.S policy in Asia following World War II.

⁹⁸ Hemmer and Katzenstein, "Why is There No NATO in Asia?" 579.

damaged after the 1965 attack by Pakistan on India. Many Indians believed that the Pakistanis were emboldened to attack because of the modern arms they possessed through the United States.⁹⁹

The 1970's saw the Indians further lean toward the Soviet sphere of influence. The decision by President Nixon in 1972 to send the U.S. Navy Seventh Fleet to the Bay of Bengal to prevent India from occupying East Pakistan, later Bangladesh, still resonates very negatively with those Indians who remember the incident. In addition, the nationalizing of various industries, to include Indian banks and insurance companies discouraged United States businesses from investing in India. India also criticized the United States' presence in Vietnam. India's nuclear test in 1974 drove United States-Indian relations to new lows.¹⁰⁰

The decade of the 1980s saw the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. From the United States perspective, providing support to the mujahideen in Afghanistan was more important at the time than the geostrategic relationship with India. Since the arms provided to the mujahideen traveled via Pakistan with assistance from the Pakistani Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI, this support damaged United States – Indian relations during the period.

When did the relationship with India begin to change? Former Under Secretary for Political Affairs R. Nicholas Burns identified three events which brought about the strengthening of United States – India ties. The first was the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The second was the historic Indian economic reforms instituted by then-Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, which began to open India up to the global economy. The third reason was the tectonic shift which occurred in the global order, and India's emergence on the world stage.¹⁰¹

The relationship was beginning to improve with President Clinton's visit to India in 2000; the first sitting President to visit India in 22 years. President Clinton hoped to lay the foundation of a long-

⁹⁹ Das Gupta, "South Asia," 103.

¹⁰⁰ Das Gupta, "South Asia," 104.

¹⁰¹ Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity with India," 131.

term relationship with India, despite India's alignment with the Soviet Union during the Cold War. President Clinton spoke to the Indian Parliament about his respect for Indian democracy and diversity. He also discussed the two countries' differences over India's nuclear program and urged a peaceful resolution to Kashmir.¹⁰² President Clinton's visit was received extremely well by the Indian people and he was treated like a celebrity. While 2001 saw the inauguration of George W. Bush and later the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, it also represented a significant change in how the United States viewed its relationship with India. President Bush and his foreign policy team concentrated on four strategic areas: civil nuclear energy, civilian space programs, high-tech commerce and missile defense.¹⁰³ The Bush administration took a more neutral view of the difficult bilateral relationship between India and Pakistan. This may have been an attempt to bring both geo-strategic countries under the United States rubric of the "Global War on Terrorism" (GWOT). United States support of Pakistan was and remains crucial to United States and NATO operations in Afghanistan. While the United States has provided massive aid and military support to Pakistan, it has done so in a manner which, from the United States' perspective has minimally alienated the Indian government.

In 2002, President Bush and Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee created the United States – India High Technology Cooperation Group (HTCG). The HTCG was created to enhance bilateral trade and promote the trade of sensitive goods and technologies. This measure helped to facilitate trade between the two countries, which would ultimately grow from \$13.5 billion in 2001 to \$37.6 billion in 2009.¹⁰⁴

On June 28, 2005 the United States and India signed the "New Framework for the U.S. – India Defense Partnership." The agreement set forth procedures for stepped up military ties, including joint

¹⁰² William Jefferson Clinton, *My Life* (New York: Random House, 2004): 1447-1449.

¹⁰³ Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity with India," 131.

¹⁰⁴ Neena Shenai, "India, the United States, and High-Tech Trade," *The American – The Online Magazine of the American Enterprise Institute*, March 14, 2010. Accessed on March 19, 2012.

http://www.american.com/archive/2010/march/india-the-united-states-and-high-tech-trade/article_print

weapons production and cooperation on missile defense. The agreement also worked “to conclude defense transactions, not solely as ends of themselves, but as a means to strengthen our countries’ security, reinforce our strategic partnership, achieve greater interaction between our armed, and build great understanding between our defense establishments.”¹⁰⁵

On July 18, 2005 President Bush and Prime Minister Singh signed the “Next Steps in Strategic Partnership” (NSSP) in Washington, D.C. The NSSP expanded cooperation in civilian nuclear activities, civilian space programs, and high technology transfer. The agreement was significant, since it was the first time a country with nuclear weapons was welcomed into the nuclear club without India having to sign the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).¹⁰⁶ Then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice realized the implications of the agreement reached far beyond nuclear cooperation, but “unlocked a wide range of possible areas of cooperation with a country that was an emerging power in the knowledge-based revolution in economic affairs.”¹⁰⁷

Signing this agreement signaled a formal recognition from the Bush Administration of India’s status as a nuclear power. In 2005, George Perkovich, an expert on the Indian nuclear program said, “That the top priority should be balancing Chinese power, that strengthening U.S.-India relations is a promising way to do this, and that both of these objectives are more important than maintaining a rule-based nonproliferation regime...India’s exclusion as an accepted nuclear power is a historical anomaly that should be corrected.”¹⁰⁸ By Perkovich’s analysis, the signing of the NSSP by President Bush corrected this “historical anomaly.” The lead United States negotiators believed that despite India’s outsider nuclear status, it had been a largely responsible steward of its nuclear material and had played by the rules of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, even though India was not a signatory to the treaty.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Pant, “India Defense Policy at a Crossroads,” 132.

¹⁰⁶ Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 97.

¹⁰⁷ Condoleezza Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 437.

¹⁰⁸ Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 97.

¹⁰⁹ Burns, “America’s Strategic Opportunity with India,” 131.

In December 2006, the United States Congress passed the Hyde Act, which approved the United States-India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Initiative, which permitted American investment in India's civil nuclear power industry, and allowed the International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEA) control and inspection of India's civilian nuclear sites. The Act was passed by a Democratically -controlled Congress with overwhelming bipartisan support, to include the votes of then Senators Obama, Biden and Clinton, demonstrating that support for strengthened United States-Indian relations extended across party lines in Washington, as it did in India.¹¹⁰ This agreement also had important ramifications from the Indian perspective, outside of purely nuclear matters. According to Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan, by putting proliferation, one of the most contentious Indo-United States issues aside, this opened the door for future defense cooperation and strategic coordination.¹¹¹ This recognition of India as a nuclear power, and non-signee of the NPT has been a significant factor in moving the United States – India strategic relationship forward.

In 2006, Khanna and Mohan described the Bush administration's position relative to India: "To his credit, the Bush administration prevented a return to the zero-sum game of the Cold War in its relations with the Sub-continental rivals and persisted with a solid engagement with New Delhi. Indeed, it is said that India and Pakistan are now 'America's two new best friends.'"¹¹² It is doubtful that New Delhi considers this an acceptable characterization of United States relations in South Asia, but it is certainly better than the "zero-sum game" that Khanna and Mohan refer to.

During Secretary of State Clinton's visit to India in July 2008, India signed the End-Use Monitoring Agreement (EUMA) which ensured that technologically sophisticated weapons imported by India from the United States would be used by the Indian defense establishment for the purpose for which the equipment was imported. The United States government is also in talks with India to sign the

¹¹⁰ Feigenbaum, "India's Rise, America's Interest," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2010, Volume 89, Issue 2, 76.

¹¹¹ Khanna and Mohan, "Getting India Right," 49.

¹¹² Khanna and Mohan, "Getting India Right," 49.

Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (AGC). These agreements have not yet been signed by India.

In the November 2011 edition of *Foreign Policy*, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton wrote an article titled, “America’s Pacific Century.” She articulated the strategic context of the importance of the Pacific region to the United States, to include the Indian Ocean and key allies and emerging powers like China, India and Indonesia. She reassured the region that even with the withdrawal from Iraq, drawdown in Afghanistan, and the economic challenges facing the United States, America is committed to keeping its economic and strategic commitments, and the ability to back those commitments, and is there to stay.¹¹³ She specifically addressed the United States’ view on India:

President Obama told the Indian Parliament last year that the relationship between India and America will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century, rooted in common values and interests. There will be obstacles to overcome and questions to answer on both sides, but the United States is making a strategic bet on India’s future – that India’s greater role on the world stage will enhance peace and security, that opening India’s markets to the world will pave the way to greater regional and global prosperity, that Indian advances in science and technology will improve lives and advance human knowledge everywhere, and that India’s vibrant, pluralistic democracy will produce measurable results and improvements for its citizens and inspire others to follow a similar path of openness and tolerance. So the Obama administration has expanded our bilateral partnership; actively supported India’s Look East efforts, including through a new trilateral dialogue with India and Japan; and outlined a new vision for a more economically integrated and politically stable South and Central Asia, with India as a linchpin.¹¹⁴

The Obama Administration seems intent on maintaining the momentum initially established by President Clinton’s visit to India in 2000, and the subsequent focus on the United States – India strategic relationship by the Bush Administration.

The United States Pacific Command (PACOM) is the Department of Defense’s geographic combatant command which has responsibility from the west coast of the United States all the way to the western border of the Indian Ocean, to include India. PACOM’s September 2010 Strategic Guidance document identifies the development of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership as one of the five focus areas

¹¹³ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, November, 2011: 2.

¹¹⁴ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” 9.

of the command. Specifically, the document lists three areas of concentration: “deepen military-to-military interaction and interoperability; encourage military-to-civilian relationships to counter common threats; and support India’s evolution as a leading and stabilizing force in South Asia.”¹¹⁵

In November 2011, the United States Department of Defense wrote the “Report to Congress on U.S.-India Security Cooperation.” The document has three sections: Current State of U.S.-India Security Cooperation; Enhancing U.S.-India Security Cooperation; and Joint Strike Fighter and Potential Co-Development of Military Weapons Systems. An overview of the current state of relations is described as follows:

Over the past decade, there has been a rapid transformation in the U.S.-India defense relationship. What was once a nascent relationship between unfamiliar nations has now evolved into a strategic partnership between two of the preeminent security powers in Asia. Today, U.S.-India defense ties are strong and growing. Our defense relationship involves a robust slate of dialogues, military exercises, defense trade, personnel exchanges, and armaments cooperation. Our efforts over the past ten years have focused on relationship-building and establishing the foundation for a long-term relationship. The strong ties between our two militaries reflect this. The United States remains committed to a broad defense trade relationship that enables transfers of some of our most advanced technologies.¹¹⁶

These efforts continue to move the relationship forward, in addition to the joint information sharing to support counterterrorism operations in both countries.

All of the United States service components conduct exercises with their Indian counterparts. Most of these exercises focus on counterterrorism, maritime security, or humanitarian assistance/disaster relief (HA/DR). Counterterrorism efforts center around Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, while maritime security efforts focus on improving maritime domain awareness and countering piracy. The *2006 Indo-U.S. Framework for Maritime Security Cooperation* addresses mutual maritime issues of concern while the *U.S.-India Counterterrorism Cooperation Initiative (CCI)*, signed in 2010 provides a framework for counterterrorism operations.¹¹⁷ In addition, these areas of mutual cooperation support the United States’

¹¹⁵ United States Pacific Command Strategic Guidance, September 2010. (http://www.pacom.mil/web/pacom_resources/pdf/PACOM%20Strategy%20Sep%202010.pdf)

¹¹⁶ U.S. Department of Defense, “Report to Congress on U.S.-India Security Cooperation,” November, 2011: 2.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Department of Defense, “Report to Congress on U.S.-India Security Cooperation,” November, 2011: 2.

maritime services' strategy as articulated in *A Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower*, which was published in October, 2007.

On April 14, 2011, Admiral Robert Willard, PACOM testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on PACOM posture. He testified that:

Given the numerous areas where U.S. and Indian interests converge, plus many shared national values, a strong India-U.S. partnership is important to future South Asian security. Cooperation is especially noteworthy in the areas of counterterrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, and maritime security...Nevertheless, India's historic leadership of the non-aligned movement and desire to maintain autonomy somewhat constrain cooperation at a level USPACOM desires. The U.S.-India relationship remains challenged by a degree of suspicion fueled by Cold War-influenced perceptions, complicated Indian political and bureaucratic processes, and the U.S.-Pakistan relationship.¹¹⁸

He also identified the fact that India and Pakistan cannot be viewed in isolation, and that PACOM and United States Central Command (CENTCOM) continue to ensure a coordinated strategic approach to both countries, since Pakistan falls within CENTCOM's area of responsibility. It is significant to note that Admiral Willard articulates the challenges of the strategic relationship, citing, among other topics the Cold War perceptions and the U.S. – Pakistan relationship.

As evidenced by the January 2012 release of the Department of Defense document, "*Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*," the United States' emphasis on the importance of the Asia Pacific region has not waned and will continue to reflect that the strategic relationship with India will remain at the forefront. The document specifically addresses India: "While the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, *we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region* (original emphasis)...The United States is also investing in a long-term strategic relationship with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the broader Indian Ocean region."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸ Admiral Robert F. Willard, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Pacific Command before the House Appropriations Committee Subcommittee on Defense on U.S. Pacific Command Posture, April 14, 2011; 18.

¹¹⁹ *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, United States Department of Defense, January 2012: 2.

Within the last twelve years, it is clear that the United States has focused on developing a strategic relationship with India across the whole of government. In 2010, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South Asia Evan Feigenbaum wrote, “The United States and India share important interests: both seek to restore growth, protect the global commons, enhance global energy security, and ensure a balance of power in Asia. They must therefore increase the scope, quality, and intensity of their cooperation at every level. But the ultimate test of their relationship will be whether Washington and New Delhi can turn their common interests into complimentary policies around the world.”¹²⁰ The nature and necessity of the relationship is best summed up in a 2007 comment from Nicholas Burns: “Today there is more of a strategic upside to our relationship with India than there is with any other major power...Sixty years ago, our countries failed to chart a common course. Sixty years from now, no one will be able to accuse us of making the same mistake twice.”¹²¹ This relationship is relatively new and comes with some challenges. How the United States and India navigate these challenges, while still moving the strategic relationship forward, will determine how far and in what direction the relationship will go in the near future. The next section will look at some of these challenges, areas for future cooperation, and how the United States can best navigate the process.

Future for United States- Indian strategic cooperation

The recent strategic communications from the United States, to include the Pentagon’s *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, Secretary of State Clinton’s article, “America’s Pacific Century,” the Congressional testimony of PACOM Commander Willard, and the PACOM Strategic Guidance all suggest the United States is concerned with a rising China, both economically and militarily. Formal alliances and historical partners will play a major role in ensuring that China does not deny the global commons to any nation or region. India will also play a very important role with regard to China, but they are nuclear-capable neighbors who share a 1,200 mile, some

¹²⁰ Feigenbaum, “India’s Rise, America’s Interest,” 76.

¹²¹ Burns, “America’s Strategic Opportunity with India,” 131.

of which is in dispute. India stands at the commanding center of the Indian Ocean, near to where the United States and China are headed for a potential conflict. The United States is evolving into a two-ocean navy: the Pacific and the Indian oceans, rather than the Pacific and the Atlantic, and China may also be evolving into a two-ocean navy: the Pacific and the Indian oceans.¹²²

Indian scholar Sunil Khilnani, of King's College London and an expert in strategic thought regarding India's place in the world, called India a "bridging power" – that is, something between America and China, between a global power and a regional power, between hard power and soft power, between the emerging power of its economy and navy and the poverty of many of its people and its weak borders.¹²³ Does the concept of bridging imply that India will lean or "tilt" towards the United States' sphere of influence or a China sphere of influence, or neither? Robert Kaplan believes that:

Although India needs to tilt toward the United States to project its own power, it cannot afford to transparently alienate China, with which it will both compete for influence and do abundant trade....Leveraging allies like India and Japan against China is responsible in one sense only: it helps provide a mechanism for the U.S. to gradually and elegantly cede great power responsibilities to like-minded others as their own capacities rise, as part of a studied retreat from a unipolar world.¹²⁴

Whether or not the United States intends to "cede great power responsibilities" to anyone, including India, remains to be seen.

India will remain non-aligned, that is, not in a formal alliance, but whereas during the Cold War India tilted toward the Soviet Union, it is now tilting toward the United States. How does the United States ensure that this trend continues and with greater "tilt" angle? Kaplan adds, "One cannot caution enough how subtly this game will have to be played, for India will never officially join the United States in any anti-Chinese alliance the way Japan joined the United States in an anti-Soviet one during the Cold War. Japan was a defeated nation after World War II, in close proximity to Soviet ports; whereas India is a strong nation with an independent streak 'codified in its policy of non-alignment,' far from the Chinese

¹²² Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 134.

¹²³ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 133.

¹²⁴ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 185.

navy's main ports.”¹²⁵ Edward Luce, the South Asia bureau chief of the *Financial Times* from 2001 to 2006 echoes this sentiment, “There is a sneaking suspicion that in practice India does wish to have closer strategic ties to the U.S. than to China but would be loath to admit this publicly, both for fear of provoking a domestic political backlash and for fear of offending China.”¹²⁶ Fear of provoking or offending China is a recurring theme, as Fareed Zakaria adds, “In Asia most nations will resist explicit balancing mechanisms (similar to NATO). They might all hedge against China, but *none* (original emphasis) will ever admit it.”¹²⁷

While India can serve as a balancer or “bridging power” in the region, how will the United States align itself in the coming decades in the Pacific and Indian Ocean region? In his book *The Post-American World: Release 2.0*, Fareed Zakaria advocates that the United States should historically emulate Bismarck, by engaging with all of the great powers, in contrast to emulating Britain, which tried to balance against rising and threatening powers. He argues that trying to prematurely contain or balance against China would have a negative overall effect. He describes, “Were Washington to balance against China, before Beijing had shown any serious inclination to disrupt the international order, it would find itself isolated – and would pay heavy costs economically and politically for itself being the disruptive force. Given America’s massive power, not overplaying its hand must be a crucial component of any grand strategy.”¹²⁸ The key will be to develop those necessary long-term strategic relationships with like-minded countries such as India, while not aggressively threatening the Chinese. Some experts believe that the developing relationship is to India’s advantage and on India’s terms. According to Amit Das Gupta:

The weakness of the American position is clearly visible in the new Indo-American ‘friendship’ since this is a partnership on Indian terms. Washington can have no doubt that India is also a potential rival in the long term. New Delhi is outspoken against the idea of a unipolar world in

¹²⁵ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 126.

¹²⁶ Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 287.

¹²⁷ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 173.

¹²⁸ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 266.

any form and insists that there be rules and regulations that apply to everybody, including the United States. Bilaterally, it (New Delhi) is after no less than a partnership of equals. Anything less would conflict in principle with a long-established self-image and confirm critical judgments India came to make during the cold war about U.S. aims in general.¹²⁹

While the United States and India may be rivals in the economic sense, the current relationship is not a partnership solely on Indian terms, and is not indicative of United States weakness.

Based on the geostrategic realities of the region, India is an excellent choice to develop as a strategic partner. Amit Das Gupta, of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated, “By supporting India instead of China, the United States will not be throwing itself out of the frying pan into fire, as there is hardly a country on the globe that is less likely to become an open or imminent threat to the United States than India, except perhaps, Israel, the other indispensable nuclear power in another explosive region.”¹³⁰ Indian national security pundit C. Raja Mohan adds that, “The United States is aware that a stronger India, even outside the United States alliance system, will inevitably contribute to regional stability. India’s principal objective, in turn, is to ensure an enduring balance of power in Asia.”¹³¹

One point of contention in the relatively new United States-India strategic partnership is India’s relationship with Iran, based on India’s growing energy needs. As of 2007, India exported 70% of its oil needs and in the next two decades, this is expected to rise to 90%.¹³² Much of this oil comes from Iran, approximately 12% of its imported crude oil, which causes friction with the United States.¹³³ India views access to oil in the Persian Gulf as a strategic interest, along with infrastructure, such as the development of pipelines through the region to facilitate that access. In some respects, India’s petroleum industry is a growing unofficial rival to India’s formal Ministry of External Affairs.¹³⁴ Indian experts agree that for

¹²⁹ Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 113.

¹³⁰ Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 98.

¹³¹ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 55.

¹³² Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 290.

¹³³ Jim Yardley, “India, Praising U.S. Ties, Defends Buying Iran’s Oil,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2012.

¹³⁴ Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 292.

New Delhi, there is no contradiction between stronger military ties with the United States and the pursuit of an Asian energy grid linking Iran to China via Pakistan, India and Burma.¹³⁵

Jim Yardley of the *New York Times* wrote on February 12, 2012, “In New Delhi, diplomats and analysts say India’s purchasing of Iranian oil is a matter of economic necessity, given its dependence on imported oil. Some say the purchases also represent diplomatic hedging in a region bracing for the withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan by 2014, or possibly sooner.”¹³⁶ Nandan Nilekani, the author of *Imagining India* and the co-founder of Infosys recognizes the dangers of relying on Iran to supply oil to a voracious Indian economy, at the risk of alienating other countries:

This search for new energy is exposing India to political risks from unstable nations, and competition with China is limiting our successes among the suppliers that remain... This scramble for energy is having wide-ranging repercussions on India’s foreign policy overall. Our energy concerns now deeply influence our positions toward Burma and Iran, with India taking stances that essentially condone human rights violations, such as the atrocities against Burmese monks. Fraternizing with these countries can undermine India’s broader geopolitical ties and its record as a democratic nation, and potentially hurt our efforts to become a ‘bridge nation’ between countries in the West and the East.¹³⁷

The challenge for the United States will be not to alienate India because of their ties to Iran, but instead trust New Delhi’s ties with Tehran, and potentially leverage the greater knowledge and access Indians have in Iran. India may also be unwilling to join other countries in enforcing economic sanctions against Iran, based on their own energy needs.

Another challenge to a continued and productive United States-Indian strategic relationship is a sense of uneasiness and mistrust of the United States by the older generation of Indian strategic elites. Stephen Cohen of the Brookings Institute observed that, “Many in the Indian strategic elite would rather see their country fail on its own than succeed with the help of others.”¹³⁸ The elites argue that the long tradition of Indian non-alignment is in danger. They also point to the nature of the bilateral United States

¹³⁵ Khanna and Mohan, “Getting India Right,” 52.

¹³⁶ Jim Yardley, “India, Praising U.S. Ties, Defends Buying Iran’s Oil,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2012.

¹³⁷ Nandan Nilekani, *Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2009), 435.

¹³⁸ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 54.

– Indian relationship during the Cold War and are distrustful of current Washington motives. The United States cannot afford to be ambivalent with India, which only begets ambiguity in return. Given the history of mutual suspicion, the lingering fear that India seeks to subvert American interests will only lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy. The United States needs to be proactive and willing to take risks to support India in a geostrategic context.¹³⁹

Despite these issues of mistrust, most Indian elites recognize that there are several issues where close cooperation will serve India’s national interests, to include fighting Islamic terrorism, containing China and Pakistan, and improving India’s global standing. Indian commentators and pundits believe that India should never be obliged to follow United States foreign policy in all areas, and that India should maintain its policy independence.¹⁴⁰ Dealing with Indian diplomats sometimes presents challenges for Western diplomats. Edward Luce described these challenges: “Foreign diplomats sometimes barely get past the opening remarks if their Indian counterparts do not feel satisfied they will be treated with exceptional respect. India wants to be reminded how important it is, and to be complimented on the profundity of its civilization.”¹⁴¹ United States diplomats and negotiators need to show restraint and patience to effectively deal with Indian diplomats.

Fareed Zakaria posits that the United States – India relationship can ultimately develop into one similar to the relationship the United States has with Great Britain and Israel. He argues that this is almost inevitable, based on the two societies becoming intertwined. However, domestic concerns and politics in India will mean that India will not want to be seen as actively involved in a balancing strategy against China, which is becoming its biggest trade partner. Zakaria adds that, “India will be uncomfortable with a designation as America’s ‘chief ally’ in Asia or as part of a new ‘special

¹³⁹ Khanna and Mohan, “Getting India Right,” 50.

¹⁴⁰ Das Gupta, “South Asia,” 101-102.

¹⁴¹ Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 283.

relationship.”¹⁴² Edward Luce disagrees with the comparison to the United States – Great Britain relationship. He stated that, “India is not, like Britain or Japan, a declining power that will happily follow America’s lead on most of the important global issues. New Delhi might have learned to curtail some of its traditional Nehruvian moralizing. But sometimes it likes to thumb its nose at the United States for the pure pleasure of it.”¹⁴³

On national security issues, state institutions often do not work because the governments of the day do not want them to work. The onus to develop national security strategies then falls on the bureaucracy which is not organized to think strategically. India does not have clearly defined national security goals or the mature national security institutional frameworks in place to develop a strategy.

According to Harsh V. Pant,

The institutional structures as they stand today are not effective enough to provide single-point military advice to the (Indian) government or to facilitate the definition of defense objectives. India’s security need make the integration of the defense ministry with the service headquarters and their close coordination with the intelligence agencies for the speedy sharing of real-time intelligence an immediate necessity.¹⁴⁴

Fareed Zakaria adds that, “The reality of Indian politics makes it difficult to define a national interest, mobilize the country behind it and then execute a set of policies to achieve its goals, whether in economic reform or foreign policy.”¹⁴⁵ The same characterization could certainly be applied to the formulation of Indian strategic national security policy. To that point, George Tanham observed in a 1992 RAND study that “India may not even have a national strategy: it is a great state characterized by the absence of one.”¹⁴⁶ In 1999, the Indian government established the National Security Advisory Board, primarily modeled after the United States National Security Council. The board has twelve members, and is

¹⁴² Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 168-173.

¹⁴³ Luce, *In Spite of the Gods*, 282.

¹⁴⁴ Pant, “India Defense Policy at a Crossroads,” 137.

¹⁴⁵ Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 181.

¹⁴⁶ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 63.

assigned to different working groups to provide expertise and advice to Indian decision makers. But as Harsh V. Pant points out,

Every government promises to make the National Security Council (NSC) a professional and effective institution, so as to make it work in an optimal manner whereby the NSC anticipates national security threats, coordinates the management of national security, and engenders long-term planning by generating new and bold ideas. But the lack of an effective NSC in India is reflective of India's ad hoc decision-making process in the realm of foreign policy, with the result that not once in its more than six-decade long history has India produced national security strategy document.¹⁴⁷

Nandan Nilekani echoes this frustration:

At the time of independence, India's leaders were clearly ahead of the people. The creation of a new, secular democracy with universal suffrage, anchored by the Indian Constitution, was a leap of faith the government took with an uncomprehending, yet trusting country. Sixty years on, however, it seems the roles have reversed. The people have gained more confidence and are reaching for the stars. India's leaders, however, seem timorous – our politics has become more tactical than visionary and what we now see among our politicians is 'a strong consensus for weak reforms.'¹⁴⁸

In order to prosper into the 21st century, the Indian people will need to faith in their governmental institutions. Without effective governance, India's attention grabbing economic growth will be unsustainable.

As India enters the 21st century, two issues that will affect their ability to sustain their economic growth are infrastructure and education. India needs to drastically improve its physical infrastructure. Only two percent of Indian roads are highways and even those are in poor condition by United States standards. Potholed highways, old port facilities and chronic electricity shortages short-circuit the Indian economy. Prime Minister Singh told the Indian Parliament in 2008 that in order for India to maintain its GDP rate of growth, it will have to increase its electricity production by eight to ten percent annually. By 2012, the Indian government plans to increase infrastructure-related spending from four percent to nine percent of GDP.

¹⁴⁷ Pant, "India Defense Policy at a Crossroads," 124.

¹⁴⁸ Nilekani, *Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation*, 295.

Educating a growing Indian middle class and providing a minimum base-level for Indian's lower castes will be a difficult challenge in the coming years. A UNESCO index recently ranked India 102 out of 129 countries on the extent, gender balance and quality of its primary education and adult literacy.¹⁴⁹ Nandan Nilekani articulated that this lack of modern infrastructure and education affect the outlook of the Indian people:

But what optimism I encounter about India is more often among people far from our shores – these are opinions shaped by our economic numbers, distant from and untouched by the tumult of our domestic politics and debates. At home, this opportunity feels much more fragile. Here, it is clear that there are many things holding us back – our pessimism around what we have accomplished so far, and a resistance to the ideas we need to implement in order to solve our remaining challenges.¹⁵⁰

While there are certainly challenges to the United States-Indian strategic relationship, there are definitely areas of mutual interest and cooperation. This paper will present several areas where the United States and India can work collectively, and where the United States can work unilaterally to set the conditions to ensure that the relationship continues on its present course, and even expands.

One area which lends itself extremely well to collaboration is the naval cooperation between the United States and India. Mariners share a common bond and the United States and India have no conflict of interest in the region. Their expanding cooperation, the prospects of greater interoperability of their armed forces, and the ability to work together as in the tsunami relief operations at the end of 2004 suggests that India and the United States are now capable of underwriting the collective goods for Southeast Asia security.¹⁵¹ An Australian commodore described his vision of the future of security operations in the Indian Ocean as a world of decentralized, network-centric sea basing, supplied by the United States, with different alliances for different scenarios; whereby frigates and destroyers of various nations can “plug and play” into these sea bases that often resemble oil rigs, spread out from the Horn of

¹⁴⁹ Feigenbaum, “India’s Rise, America’s Interest,” 76.

¹⁵⁰ Nilekani, *Imagining India: The Idea of a Renewed Nation*, 5.

¹⁵¹ Mohan, “India’s Geopolitics and Southeast Asian Security,” 55.

Africa to the Indonesian archipelago.¹⁵² Then Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Michael Mullen in 2006 stated, “Where the old ‘Maritime Strategy’ focused on sea control, the new one must recognize that the economic tide of all nations rise not when the seas are controlled by one [nation], but rather when they are made safe and free for all. “ He went on to add, “I’m after that proverbial 1,000-ship Navy – a fleet-in-being, if you will, comprised of all freedom-loving nations, standing watch over the seas, standing watch over each other.”¹⁵³

The United States should continue with and expand on its policy of dehyphenation of India and Pakistan, i.e. not inextricably linking Pakistan and India for every United States foreign policy decision relevant to the region. The United States no longer views issues specific to South Asia as “India-Pakistan” issues. This process began during the first George W. Bush administration. Then Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice described this as the United States “delinking” relations with Islamabad and New Delhi and that there was no more talk of United States policy towards India-Pakistan, or “Indo-Pak.” The United States now had two distinct approaches to both important countries.¹⁵⁴ Ashley J. Tellis, a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, described the necessity of dehyphenation because, “The idea that India, the larger and more strategically important country, was incontestably a success story that now manifested itself as a rising global power, whereas Pakistan, the weaker and less significant state, appeared to be a troubled country teetering repeatedly on the brink of failure.”¹⁵⁵

While this change in dehyphenation may seem relatively insignificant from a United States perspective, it is extremely important from the Indian perspective not to be linked to Pakistan on every issue relevant to the region. This policy should continue, and apply to senior leader visits to the region as well. Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan commented, “The U.S. must be careful about assuming that it

¹⁵² Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 16.

¹⁵³ Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 292.

¹⁵⁴ Rice, *No Higher Honor*, 436.

¹⁵⁵ Ashley J. Tellis, “The Merits of Dehyphenation: Explaining U.S. Success in Engaging India and Pakistan,” *The Washington Quarterly*, 2008, Volume 31, Number 4, p. 23.

can succeed in satisfying both India and Pakistan simultaneously by way of what it views as incremental and mutually exclusive bilateral armament. Though the U.S. increasingly sees Pakistan as a necessary front in dealing with Iran, it is the U.S. that is losing out by allowing the Pakistani's military gravy train to continue."¹⁵⁶ This policy does not imply that dealing with the Pakistani-Indian relationship will be any easier in the future, as evidenced by the observation of G. Parthasarathy, a former advisor to Indira Gandhi, who said that, "An India-Pakistan reconciliation is like trying to treat two patients whose only disease is an allergy to each other."¹⁵⁷

The United States should advocate for India to be made a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, with associated veto power. This may limit the United States' freedom of action with regard to the Security Council, since India and the United States will not always agree on policy matters. It is an appropriate measure which would reflect the changing demographics and geostrategic landscape, as India is the largest democratic country in the world with over one billion people, and has nuclear weapons. In 2010, President Obama pledged to support India's desire for a permanent seat, but there has been little movement on the issue since.

The United States should increase the number of H1-B visas available to Indian computer software developers and scientists. The United States Citizenship and Immigration Services administers the H1-B Visa Program. United States businesses use the H1-B program to employ foreign workers in specialty occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise in specialized fields, such as scientists, engineers, or computer programmers. The Fiscal Year 2012 cap on H1-B visas is 65,000. Because of free trade agreements with Chile and Singapore, an additional 6,800 were set aside for workers from those countries.¹⁵⁸ The number of H1-B visas available to Indians has been a point of contention in recent

¹⁵⁶ Khanna and Mohan, "Getting India Right," 54.

¹⁵⁷ Cohen, *India: Emerging Power*, 61.

¹⁵⁸ United States Citizenship and Immigration Services website: <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis/menuitem>. (Accessed on March 19, 2012).

years, both for the Indian government and for high-tech companies, particularly in Silicon Valley. The United States should consider increasing this number, specifically for Indian software engineers.

The United States government should fully engage the non-resident Indian (NRI) community in the United States. The United States-Indian relationship is supported by both American and Indian businesspeople, the nearly 100,000 Indian students studying in the United States colleges and universities, some three million Indian Americans and the tens of millions of Indians with relatives in the United States.¹⁵⁹ This community can serve as an important link between the United States and India, and help to bring down the barriers of mistrust and misunderstanding between the two countries, especially among the older generations.

The Department of Defense-run International Military Education and Training (IMET) program serves an extremely important role in developing long-lasting relationships between military professionals from both countries. IMET focuses on exchange programs to enhance familiarity, strengthen professionalism, and facilitate cooperation during bilateral exercises and strategy discussions. The Defense Policy Group (DPG) is chaired by the United States Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and the Indian Defense Secretary. At the 2011 DPG, both countries agreed to exchange lists of possible personnel exchange and training opportunities to help expand people-to-people ties between leaders at all levels. The United States is looking to expand the formal Personnel Exchange Program for India across all of the services. The United States will also look to expand the number of United States officers regularly attending Indian Professional Military Education Schools. The objective is to increase the number of service personnel in each country who understand their Indian or U.S. counterparts.¹⁶⁰ These programs should be augmented to the greatest extent possible, both monetarily and in assigning personnel targeted for further career advancement.

¹⁵⁹ Feigenbaum, "India's Rise, America's Interest," 76.

¹⁶⁰ U.S. Department of Defense, "Report to Congress on U.S.-India Security Cooperation," November, 2011: 6.

The United States should not only encourage military-to-military relationships between the United States and India, but foster relationship building between the Indian Ministry of Defense and the United States' Office of the Secretary of Defense and the Department of State. This would have the benefit of exposing Indian civilian officials to the policy side of the Department of Defense, as well as showing them an alternative model of civilian-military relations. Because the increasing level of military-to-military liaison and cooperation between the United States and India makes some Indian Ministry of Defense officials nervous, Washington and New Delhi should also enhance the level of transparency in their relationship. United States officials could brief their Indian counterparts on relevant talks between Washington and Beijing, and India could brief United States diplomats on developments at its BRIC summit.¹⁶¹

Perhaps the strongest characteristic of the United States-Indian strategic relationship is the democratic principles upon which each country is based. Certainly, these principles bring their own challenges with regard to election cycles, the formation of national strategy, and economic growth, but these challenges are transcended by the concept of democracy. Fareed Zakaria described that “Americans understand Indian government. It may be difficult to understand the Iranian or Chinese structure, but a quarrelsome democracy that keeps moving backward, forward, and sideways – *that* they understand.”¹⁶² Parag Khanna and C. Raja Mohan add that, “Better relations create rising expectations. As American and Indian interests naturally come into close alignment, both countries must recognize that their noisy democracies will examine every minute detail in the agreements that the two governments negotiate. Preventing these noises from overwhelming the long-awaited strategic signals of greater engagement will be the most difficult challenge that Washington and Delhi have to overcome.”¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Feigenbaum, “India’s Rise, America’s Interest,” 76.

¹⁶² Zakaria, *The Post-American World*, 167.

¹⁶³ Khanna and Mohan, “Getting India Right,” 61.

There will not always be lock-step agreement on all issues between the two countries. How the two countries manage their disagreements going forward will determine the length and depth of the relationship. R. Nicholas Burns, the Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs from 2005 to 2008 stated, “For its part, the United States must adjust to a friendship with India that will feature a wider margin of disagreement than we are accustomed to – but a friendship in which the extra effort will be made up for by long-term rewards.... It is critical that Americans consider their future with India realistically, guarding against undue optimism and excessive expectations”¹⁶⁴ From the Indian perspective, Indian Foreign Secretary Ranjan Mathai, in a speech on February 6, 2012 in Washington, D.C., spoke of the great potential of the two nations’ partnership, and also the complexities embedded into it: “Given our different circumstances, history, location and levels of development, we will occasionally have differing perspectives and policies, but this can be a source of great value and strength.”¹⁶⁵

As India finds its place on the world stage, either as a regional security provider, or world power, in all aspects of the term, the United States stands ready. The key for the United States will be to engage India with a deft hand and not with an overbearing unipolar perspective. The United States has recognized the importance of India in the 21st century. The challenge will be managing the relationship with a country that is sometimes mistrustful of the motives of the United States, and focusing on issues of common interest.

¹⁶⁴ Burns, “America’s Strategic Opportunity with India,” 131.

¹⁶⁵ Yarley, “India, Praising U.S. Ties, Defends Buying Iran’s Oil,” *The New York Times*, February 12, 2012.

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