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**U.S.-INDIA MARITIME COOPERATION: THE
STRATEGIC UTILITY OF NAVAL ENGAGEMENT**

by

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NAVAL ENGAGEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The United States and India both perceive China's growing military might and assertive foreign policy as a threat to their national strategic objectives, a realization that is driving the two nations toward a close defense partnership with naval cooperation at its center. Although U.S. leaders have embraced naval cooperation as the most promising way forward, no readily available study of how U.S.–India naval cooperation bears on U.S. interests exists as a guide to further U.S. strategic objectives in the region. There is a lack of synthesized information regarding the topic to aid those involved in crafting and implementing U.S. policy. This thesis fills that gap by answering the question: Why should the United States advance naval cooperation with India? The research identifies the underlying factors driving the United States and India toward a closer defense partnership and examines the utility of advancing U.S.–India maritime cooperation. It also offers various ways in which U.S.–India maritime cooperation might aid the United States and India in furthering their respective strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. This research directly benefits U.S. leaders by providing them with a clear assessment of the utility of U.S.–India naval cooperation as they navigate the complexities of the growing U.S.–India defense partnership.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADIZ	air defense identification zone
ANC	Andaman and Nicobar Command
AOR	area of operations
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASuW	anti-surface warfare
ASW	anti-submarine warfare
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CAATSA	Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act
CDS	Chief of Defense Staff
CENTO	Central Treaty Organization
CISMOA	Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement
CMEC	China Myanmar Economic Corridor
COMCASA	Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement
CP	Congress Party
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
DRDO	Defense Research and Development Organization
ECS	East China Sea
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FON	freedom of navigation
FONOP	freedom of navigation operation
GPC	great power competition
HA/DR	humanitarian assistance disaster relief
HOA	Horn of Africa
INC	Indian National Congress
IONS	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
IOR	Indian Ocean region
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
ISR	intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance

JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NTS	non-traditional security
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLA(N)	People's Liberation Army (Navy)
SAR	search and rescue
SCIO	State Council Information Office
SCS	South China Sea
SEATO	South East Asia Treaty Organization
SLOC	sea lines of communication
TTP	tactics techniques and procedures
UCC	Unified Combatant Command
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
VEO	violent extremist organizations
WMD	weapons of mass destruction

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I. INTRODUCING THE INDO-PACIFIC

China's expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific region over the last decade has resulted in a significant convergence of interest between the United States and India.¹ The increasingly cordial state of U.S.–Indian relations is a recent phenomenon, representing a departure from the historically strained state of affairs that persisted from the mid-1960s until the negotiation of the U.S.–India Nuclear Agreement between 2005 and 2008.² The United States and India both perceive China's growing military might and assertive foreign policy to be a threat to their national strategic objectives,³ and this is driving the two nations toward a close defense partnership with navy-to-navy cooperation at its center.⁴ Although U.S. leaders appear to have embraced naval cooperation as the most promising way forward, no readily available study of how Indo–U.S. naval cooperation bears on U.S. interests exists to guide U.S. leaders in furthering U.S. strategic objectives in the region. The literature has yet to synthesize this information in a form that is accessible and relevant to those involved in crafting and implementing U.S. policy. A study of Indo–U.S. common strategic interests and the utility of naval cooperation with India therefore benefits U.S. leaders as they navigate the complexities of the growing U.S.–India defense relationship.

Thus, the research here seeks to answer the question: why should the United States advance naval cooperation with India? The research here examines the history of Indo–U.S. relations, and how China's expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific region is impacting that relationship. It then analyses the utility of advancing Indo–U.S. maritime cooperation

¹ Richard Rahul Verma and Samir Saran, *Strategic Convergence: The United States and India as Major Defence Partners* (New Delhi, India: Observer Research Foundation, 2019), <https://www.orfonline.org/research/strategic-convergence-the-united-states-and-india-as-major-defence-partners-52364/>.

² George Perkovich, "Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal," *Daedalus* 139, no. 1 (January 2010): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2010.139.1.20>.

³ Phil Davidson, "China's Challenge to a Free and Open Indo-Pacific" (Speech by Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government, September 30, 2019), <https://www.pacom.mil/Media/Speeches-Testimony/Article/1976518/chinas-challenge-to-a-free-and-open-indo-pacific/>.

⁴ Vivek Mishra, "India–US Defence Cooperation: Assessing Strategic Imperatives," *Strategic Analysis* 42, no. 1 (March 21, 2018): 1–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1420121>.

by exploring the various ways in which Indo–U.S. maritime cooperation might aid the United States and India in furthering their respective strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. This study aims to ascertain the underlying factors driving the United States and India toward a closer defense relationship, and examine the role that naval cooperation plays in supporting U.S. interests.

A. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH QUESTION

Currently the United States Navy is experiencing a surge in demand for its operational units combined with steadily increasing costs associated with maintaining its high operational tempo. According to recent reporting, the U.S. Navy “can fulfill only about half of the theatre commanders’ requests for Navy ships ... [and] the length of deployments has increased and the time between deployments has decreased.”⁵ Although Naval cooperation may represent a promising opportunity to enrich the Indo–U.S. defense relationship, the decision to involve U.S. naval units in additional naval commitments in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) would undoubtedly involve pulling units away from other tasking. Given the present scarcity of naval forces, no decision to place naval cooperation at the center of building U.S.–Indian relations should be taken lightly. Answering this research question will help U.S. policymakers and military leaders allocate scarce U.S. resources in the Indo-Pacific region in the most impactful way possible.

Additionally, while the United States and India are making unprecedented progress in furthering their defense cooperation, these activities risk being overshadowed by the significant threat posed by China. Many U.S. leaders have made improving their understanding of China a priority, and are less familiar with India’s interests and the dynamics surrounding its relationship with the United States and China. This research will fill this critical knowledge gap by revealing the complexities of the historical U.S.–Indian relationship, while elucidating the significance of China’s rise and its implications for the strategic objectives of the United States and India. The strategic objectives of India and the United States still differ substantially, although they are significantly converging in their

⁵ Mark F. Cancian, *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2020: Navy* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-military-forces-fy-2020-navy>.

perspective on China. Understanding India's unique perspective and goals will equip U.S. leaders to more prudently manage the U.S.–India strategic partnership. Knowledge gained through this line of inquiry will also directly contribute to U.S. efforts to build defense partnerships with other nations in the IOR.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature provides a brief overview of regional dynamics in the IOR and the broader Indo-Pacific Region, as well as the numerous and often conflicting perspectives in the extant literature regarding these topics. The literature covered in this section is intended to establish a general understanding of the salient issues affecting regional power dynamics, including an overview of the importance of the IOR and a brief synopsis of U.S.–Indian relations, followed by a study of the unique limitations affecting Indian defense policy and China's expansion in the region.

1. The Indian Ocean Region and U.S.–Indian Relations

Within U.S. policy circles there is an ongoing debate over the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean, and how the U.S. should engage the region. Walter Ladwig and Christopher Preble both argue that the Indian Ocean region (IOR) is not central to U.S. strategic interests, and that the United States currently suffers from “imperial overstretch.”⁶ The solution, according to both authors, is to shift more of the burden of security onto the states bordering the IOR, expecting “countries with far more tangible and urgent interests in the region to take responsibility for securing these interests”⁷ while the United States concentrates its resources in areas of more immediate concern, such as East Asia. Ladwig argues that “the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean region to the United States is [based] on its importance for key U.S. allies and partners” and that the U.S. should “facilitate the emergence of a multipolar regional arrangement led by strong democratic

⁶ Peter Dombrowski and Andrew C. Winner, “American Strategy in the Indian Ocean,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 16–17.

⁷ Christopher A. Preble, “Leaving Unipolarity Behind: A Strategic Framework for Advancing U.S. Interests in the Indian Ocean Region,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 68.

states.”⁸ Preble agrees with Ladwig and claims that “The IOR is and should be low on the list of priorities. The United States has relatively few core security interests in the region, and certainly far fewer than in most other parts of the world.”⁹ Preble advocates in favor of supporting the rise of India as the regional hegemon, rather than a multipolar arrangement of democratic states envisioned by Ladwig.

While the promise of shifting the security burden to the states bordering the IOR might appeal to U.S. leaders seeking to minimize foreign expenditures and military engagements, James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara categorize Preble and Ladwig’s recommendations as akin to an offshore balancing strategy, and argue that this strategy would likely cause “deep suspicions and hard feelings owing to perceptions of U.S. abandonment in the wake of an offshore posture.”¹⁰ Additionally, Holmes and Yoshihara highlight the danger that might arise from the U.S. ceding its normalized presence in the region, writing that “an aspiring hegemon unaccustomed to a nearby U.S. presence would be inclined to exaggerate the likely effects of U.S. reentry into Eurasian geopolitics. Hypersensitivity to external interference might goad such a power into destabilizing actions that it would otherwise never countenance.”¹¹ The abandonment of the Indian Ocean may be a hypothetical option for the United States, but in reality it is an unlikely course of action and only supported by a small subset of the literature.

In contrast to the views espoused by Preble and Ladwig, a majority of the literature recognizes the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean to the United States. William Martel argues that “the IOR is critical to U.S. interests, and its overall significance is likely to increase during the next several decades.”¹² The sea lines of communication that cross

⁸ Walter Ladwig, “Strengthening Partners to Keep the Peace: A Neo-Nixon Doctrine for the Indian Ocean Region,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 29.

⁹ Preble, “Leaving Unipolarity Behind: A Strategic Framework for Advancing U.S. Interests in the Indian Ocean Region,” 67–68.

¹⁰ James Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, “Offshore Balancing in the Indian Ocean,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 102.

¹¹ Holmes and Yoshihara, 103.

¹² William C. Martel, “Reformulating A Grand Strategy in the Indian Ocean Region,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 52.

the Indian Ocean are integral to the continued economic growth of the Indo-Pacific region, and China's critical reliance on these trade routes are driving its expansion into the region. Due to this growing Chinese presence in the region, Robert Kaplan observes that the Indian Ocean is the area where "the rivalry between the United States and China in the Pacific [now] interlocks with the regional rivalry between China and India."¹³ In this way, the strategic issues of East Asia and the Indian Ocean are inseparable.

Although much of the literature agrees that the Indian Ocean is of serious strategic importance to the United States, perspectives differ on how the U.S. should advance its interests in the region. Andrew Winner advocates a strategy that prioritizes building a regional capacity to address transnational threats, and believes that the primary challenges to U.S. interests in the region are posed by issues such as transnational terrorism and WMD proliferation.¹⁴ Winner sees Chinese expansion into the IOR as inevitable, and views institutions and partnerships designed to confront transnational threats as a means to allow China to contribute positively to regional security.¹⁵ Teresita Schaffer accepts that transnational security issues are important, but disagrees with Winner on his belief that these threats are "drivers of regional relationships."¹⁶ Instead, she advocates an approach that builds coalitions for security throughout the region, while recognizing India's position as the predominant regional power and ensuring that it retains a leadership role in the region.¹⁷ Michael Auslin supports the view that the U.S. should build coalitions for security in the IOR, but does not envision India occupying a position of primacy in a future

¹³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011), 9.

¹⁴ Dombrowski and Winner, "American Strategy in the Indian Ocean," 19.

¹⁵ Andrew C. Winner, "Combating Transnational Security Threats in the Indian Ocean: A Focused U.S. Regional Strategy," in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 183–84.

¹⁶ Teresita C. Schaffer, "The Indian Ocean: Protecting Access to a Volatile Powerhouse," in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 158.

¹⁷ Schaffer, 157–58.

coalition of democratic states. Like Schaffer, Auslin views a coalition of Indian Ocean democracies as being “a balance to the growth of the Chinese military.”¹⁸

Recent events seem to suggest that the current U.S. administration has chosen to adopt an India-centric IOR strategy, with the intention of establishing India as a regional balance against Chinese expansion. A public speech by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson envisioned an “Indo-Pacific supported and protected by two strong pillars of democracy: The United States and India,”¹⁹ and comments made by Secretary of Defense James Mattis affirmed the U.S. commitment to “expand India’s role as a primary Major Defense Partner.”²⁰ Despite these positive statements, impediments to the growing Indo–U.S. defense relationship remain, with the Indian decision to purchase the Russian S-400 anti-aircraft missile system and its ongoing trade relationship with Iran clashing with U.S. efforts to impose sanctions on both Russia and Iran.²¹ Cara Abercrombie suggests that these issues are a sign that the Indo–U.S. “strategic partnership lacks elements of a mature relationship that are critical to enabling the cooperation envisioned.”²² She attributes the relationship’s lack of maturity to the fact that India has never had a “multidimensional security partner” like the United States, and that this uncharted territory is further complicated by “frequent turnover in both countries’ bureaucracies,” an issue made even more pronounced by the tumultuous Trump presidency. Rajagopalan observes that “the

¹⁸ Michael Auslin, “From Hub to Hinge: A Strategic Framework to Promote Security Interests in the Indian Ocean,” in *The Indian Ocean and U.S. Grand Strategy* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014), 144.

¹⁹ Rex Tillerson, “Defining Our Relationship with India for the Next Century: An Address by U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 18, 2017), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/defining-our-relationship-india-next-century-address-us-secretary-state-rex-tillerson>.

²⁰ James N. Mattis, “Secretary of Defense Mattis’ Remarks at India 2+2 Joint Press Conference” (Speech, 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue Joint Press Conference, New Delhi, India, September 6, 2018), <https://dod.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1621909/secretary-of-defense-mattis-remarks-at-india-22-joint-press-conference/>.

²¹ Ashley J. Tellis and Suhasini Haidar, “In U.S.’ Zeal to Mount Frontal Assault on Iran, India Has Become an Inadvertent Casualty,” *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace* (blog), July 23, 2018, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/07/23/in-u.s.-zeal-to-mount-frontal-assault-on-iran-india-has-become-inadvertent-casualty-pub-76891>.

²² Cara Abercrombie, “Realizing the Potential: Mature Defense Cooperation and the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership,” *Asia Policy* 14, no. 1 (January 30, 2019): 119–44, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2019.0011>.

potential for deepening domestic political chaos in the United States [complicates] the outlook for U.S.–India relations.”²³ Since it is readily apparent that the U.S. has adopted an India-centric policy, the future success of any U.S.–India defense cooperation initiatives may rest with India.

India views its relationship with the United States as one that shows potential, but this potential is tempered by its restrained approach toward international cooperation. The prevailing literature on this complex association tends to focus on the steady growth of cooperation between the two nations. This cooperation is made possible by the gradual transition away from their Cold War divisions, the growing perception of a common democratic heritage, and a shared concern over Chinese assertiveness. There is broad consensus within the academic community that the strengthening of Indo–U.S. ties is largely driven by an increasingly bullish China, with James R. Holmes predicting in 2012 that the threat posed by China’s rise would present the necessary preconditions to quicken Indo–US rapprochement.²⁴ This prediction seems to have been borne out, with Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan observing that “India and the U.S. now see each other as a crucial partner in offsetting China’s increasingly assertive role in Asia.”²⁵ Rajesh Rajagopalan points out that, due to the sheer size of China’s military expansion, building ties with the United States is a necessary step if India hopes to balance against China.²⁶ Despite this, numerous institutional roadblocks have slowed Indo–U.S. rapprochement, with India and the U.S. differing dramatically in their approach to building coalitions and partnerships.

Impediments to the construction of an Indo–U.S. partnership are numerous, but not insurmountable. First, the U.S. is accustomed to negotiating from a position of primacy, which is incompatible with India’s expectation that it be treated as an equal. Cohen and

²³ Rajeswari Rajagopalan, “U.S.-India Relations under President Trump: Promise and Peril,” *Asia Policy* 24 (July 2017): 1, <https://doi.org/10.1353.asp.2017.0042>.

²⁴ James Holmes, “The U.S.-India Naval Cooperation: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 139–57.

²⁵ Anit Mukherjee and Raja Mohan, “India’s Naval Moment,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 242.

²⁶ Rajagopalan, “U.S.-India Relations under President Trump: Promise and Peril.”

Dasgupta cite an Indian general who articulates this viewpoint, stating that “The U.S. is accustomed to working with allies and subordinate countries ... [but] we want an equal relationship that allows us to maintain positions different from the U.S.”²⁷ Ladwig and Mukherjee also recognize the importance of this sentiment among Indian leaders, and maintain that “closer ties with the United States, especially on the terms that Americans are used to, do not fit well with India’s traditional preference for strategic autonomy.”²⁸ Additionally, India’s close relationship with U.S. adversaries, specifically Iran and Russia, present additional difficulties for U.S. policymakers. A current example of this is India’s recent agreement “to purchase the S-400 air defense system from Russia, which may lead to sanctions under the Counter America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act.”²⁹ Additionally, Indo–U.S. relations are further complicated by the collapse of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and U.S.-imposed restrictions on oil exports from Iran, which are an important source of energy for India.³⁰ U.S. attempts to dissuade India from engaging with its adversaries are unlikely to bear fruit, due to India’s unwavering commitment to strategic autonomy.

India also suffers from the persistence of a residual anti-U.S. sentiment that has its roots in India’s Cold War policy of non-alignment, when the U.S. contributed significantly to Pakistan’s military capability, and Indo–U.S. relations reached an all-time low. In a statement to the U.S. Congress, Admiral Robert Willard reported that “The U.S.–India relationship remains challenged by a degree of suspicion fueled by Cold War–influenced perceptions.”³¹ He was correct that actions taken by the U.S. during the Indo–Pakistani war of 1971 continue to affect Indian perceptions of the U.S., and Mohan observes that “sections of [India’s] strategic community refuse to forget the U.S. dispatch of the USS

²⁷ Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2010), 177.

²⁸ Walter Ladwig and Anit Mukherjee, “India and the United States: The Contours of an Asian Partnership,” *Asia Policy* 14, no. 1 (January 2019): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2019.0012>.

²⁹ Ladwig and Mukherjee, 16.

³⁰ Tellis and Haidar, “In U.S.’ Zeal to Mount Frontal Assault on Iran, India Has Become an Inadvertent Casualty.”

³¹ C. Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 252.

Enterprise during India's war to liberate Bangladesh.”³² Throughout the literature, there is broad agreement that in order for the Indo–U.S. partnership to flourish, the United States will have to maintain a focused effort to remain sensitive to Indian historic reservations, and accommodative toward the Indian desire to remain independent from foreign influence.

2. The Growth of the Indo-Pacific

Understanding the U.S. interest in cultivating ties with India also requires understanding the rise of the perception of the Indo-Pacific region as a single entity, a viewpoint most recently affirmed by the official re-naming of the U.S. Pacific Command to the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command. The concept of the Indo-Pacific region as a single interconnected entity is a relatively recent phenomenon, and Timothy Hoyt explains in his essay “Emerging Regional Geopolitics” that “it is only in the post-Cold War world, and particularly in the first decade of the twenty-first century, that the idea of an ‘Indo-Pacific’ emerged.”³³ This emergence is largely due to the incredible growth of Asian economic output combined with vast reserves of untapped resources and manpower, what Sureesh Mehta describes as “the world’s most economically dynamic region ... [and] the center of gravity of the world’s economic and strategic interests.”³⁴ The dissolution of the Cold War-era conceptualization of the Indian and Pacific oceans as separate entities and the rise of the Indo-Pacific region as a unified construct helps to explain why the United States views India as a crucial player in its strategic posture in the Indo-Pacific region.

The growing affluence of the Indo-Pacific region relies upon sea lines of communication (SLOC) that traverse vast distances of open ocean and numerous maritime chokepoints, and the significance of these trade routes has not been lost on the many countries of the Indo-Pacific. As the two most populous nations in the world, India and China both command rapidly growing economies with trade concerns that encompass the

³² Mohan, 242.

³³ Timothy Hoyt, “Emerging Regional Geopolitics,” in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 9–19.

³⁴ Sureesh Mehta, “The Indo-Pacific Imperative,” in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 3–9.

entire region, and it is their increasing reliance on SLOCs that has driven both to gradually turn away from a continental military focus. This viewpoint is supported by Probal Ghosh, who claims China neglected naval power in the past due to its “traditional continental leanings,” but this mindset is giving way to a growing emphasis on building a strong naval force caused by “the realization that maritime power often holds the key to enhanced international status [and] achieving national objectives.”³⁵ K. Raja Menon also supports the concept of a fading continental mindset in China due to its increasing reliance on SLOCs, writing “as flag follows trade in the classic Mahanian sense, China’s navy will soon be a player in the maritime security of the region.”³⁶

The same forces are at work in India, where the pre-eminence of the continental mindset is giving way to a new emphasis on “India’s outward projection into the Indian Ocean.”³⁷ Rajagopalan observes that India is “moving away from the predominantly continental approach ... [due to] growing maritime interests, including energy security and global trade.”³⁸ Thus, both Indian and Chinese interests are increasingly oriented toward the maritime domain; however, this shift in focus has also seen the extension of Sino–Indian tensions into the maritime environment. Koh Swee Lean Collin observes that the Sino–Indian turn toward maritime power has seen an “extension of the traditionally land-based Sino–Indian security dilemma into the maritime dimension,” in what he describes as a “new normal” of maritime expansion and unease between the two powerful Asian states, driven by a mutual desire to protect vital seaborne economic interests.³⁹ There is widespread agreement throughout extant literature that increasing globalization and

³⁵ Probal Ghosh, “Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 101.

³⁶ K. Raja Menon, “Historical Evolution and Security Discussions,” in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 23.

³⁷ Harsh Pant, “Introduction,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 7.

³⁸ Rajeswari Rajagopalan, “India’s Maritime Strategy,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 13–37.

³⁹ Koh Swee Lean Collin, “‘New Normal’ in the Indo Pacific: Sino-Indian Maritime Security Dilemma,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 144–75.

economic growth are driving both India and China away from a continental perspective, and toward a greater focus on maritime security concerns.

As the Indo-Pacific region becomes an increasingly vital realm of global trade, it has also grappled with a variety of non-state security concerns, what Vijay Sakhuja refers to as “non-traditional security challenges (NTS).”⁴⁰ Piracy features prominently in the extant literature as a major regional concern, but issues of terrorism, smuggling, climate change, natural disasters and disease are also cited by Sakhuja as being threats that are “transnational in nature, and defy unilateral remedies ... requiring comprehensive political, economic, and social responses as well as the humanitarian use of military force.”⁴¹ The numerous non-traditional security challenges present in the Indian Ocean Region provide ample opportunity for Indo–U.S. engagement to occur. Extant literature on this topic tends to agree that enhanced cooperation is beneficial in principle, but a debate ensues around the challenge of implementation. James R. Holmes summarizes this dilemma, stating that constructing a coalition is never a simple matter, “despite oft-stated, doubtless sincere pledges ... to clear the seas and skies of scourges such as piracy, terrorism, weapons proliferation, and unlawful trafficking of various sorts.”⁴²

3. India’s Unique Domestic Limitations

Indian domestic issues uniquely shape its strategic outlook, military policy, and approach to military cooperation, and these domestic considerations will strongly affect any U.S. efforts to increase maritime cooperation. The Indian approach is still dramatically influenced by decisions made at the time of partition, and shortly after, by Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Congress Party.⁴³ Among these foundational decisions was the complete subordination of the Indian military under civilian control, to such a degree that “the Indian armed forces were never encouraged to contribute

⁴⁰ Vijay Sakhuja, “Non-Traditional Security Challenges,” in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 114.

⁴¹ Sakhuja.

⁴² Holmes, “The U.S.-India Naval Cooperation: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” 151.

⁴³ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, chap. 1.

meaningfully to higher decision-making and the management of national security and related foreign policies at the politico-military level.”⁴⁴ This had the desired effect of removing the military as a political force, but also severely limited the military’s ability to articulate its needs.⁴⁵ Additionally, India’s decades-long policy of non-alignment and “limited understanding ... for using military power to advance foreign policy objectives”⁴⁶ led to the emergence of a school of thought known as “strategic restraint” that pervades Indian military policy to this day. Cohen and Dasgupta credit the combination of civilian subordination of the military and aversion to using military power as a foreign policy tool with the Indian failure to implement “institutional reform that pushes the development of joint doctrines, integrates the services with political decision making in higher defense planning, and issues clear statements of strategic national goals.”⁴⁷

Among the multitude of severe problems caused by the complete subordination of India’s military to civilian control, India’s broken weapons procurement and development cycle is oft-cited as the most pressing shortcoming faced by India’s Navy. Cohen and Dasgupta highlight India’s Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) as a critical source of institutional failure, citing its “veto power over what India can import ... [and] dual role of supplier and evaluator” as major reasons for India’s acquisitions failures.⁴⁸ Timothy Hoyt also points to the DRDO as a main source of India’s defense acquisitions dilemma, highlighting its “powerful institutional ability to interfere in the procurement process” and reliance on inefficient state-run defense industry. Hoyt also mentions the lack of private enterprise in India’s defense industry as being responsible for cost overruns, delays, and poor quality control due to the lack of incentives to compete and be held accountable.⁴⁹ This cycle of failure is allowed to continue due to “civilian

⁴⁴ Uday Bhaskar, “The Navy as an Instrument of Foreign Policy,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 41–55.

⁴⁵ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, chap. 1.

⁴⁶ Bhaskar, “The Navy as an Instrument of Foreign Policy.”

⁴⁷ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 28.

⁴⁸ Cohen and Dasgupta, 32.

⁴⁹ Timothy Hoyt, “India in the U.S. Naval Strategy,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 127–44.

politicians with little knowledge about strategic or military affairs ... [who have] allowed DRDO a free hand for decades.”⁵⁰ Cohen and Dasgupta underscore the fact that the “DRDO has not delivered a single major weapons system to the armed forces in five decades of existence” as evidence of the brokenness of the DRDO.

The damning claims made by Cohen and Dasgupta are buttressed by K. Raja Menon, who also criticizes the government’s veto power over defense acquisitions as being responsible for disastrous delays in the Indian Navy’s Type 16 frigate program.⁵¹ These delays occurred due to an optimistic Department of Electronics ruling that a complex electronic component for the Type 16 frigate could be manufactured in India, only to determine months later that the component was beyond the scope of Indian manufacturing capability. This error led to a significant “delay and increase in cost.”⁵² R. Pillai Rajagopalan confirms that this problem was not unique to the Type 16 frigate program, but rather a problem endemic to the Indian defense industry as a whole, stating that “the bureaucratic impediments and case-by-case approval has meant huge delays in the procurement-induction cycle.”⁵³ Additionally, Rajagopalan specifically cites these persistent procurement delays as posing a serious threat to the Indian Navy’s ability to construct new vessels at a rate that will enable it to maintain its current force structure.

The second major shortfall of India’s civilian leadership is its seeming inability to provide informed and codified strategic guidance. This is affirmed by Cohen and Dasgupta, who observe that the Indian military suffers from “little or no serious integration of strategic planning ... [due to] the lack of civilian expertise in defense and security matters.”⁵⁴ They go on to claim that the limited guidance that is promulgated is “vague, and strengthens the resolve to do as little as possible and as late as possible ... [and that] only a handful of MPs take strategic issues seriously, and even fewer are interested in the

⁵⁰ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 34.

⁵¹ K. Raja Menon, “Technology and the Indian Navy,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 92.

⁵² Menon, 92.

⁵³ Rajagopalan, “India’s Maritime Strategy,” 24.

⁵⁴ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 144.

military or the application of force.”⁵⁵ Harsh V. Pant also observes that this “lack of strategic vision and formal direction to the Indian Navy has undermined its ability to evolve.”⁵⁶

India’s failure to produce substantive strategic guidance has left the services rudderless, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the Indian Navy’s 2009 Maritime Doctrine, which outlines a list of the Indian Navy’s military responsibilities that “appears to encompass every possible wartime function,” far exceeding the Indian Navy’s current capabilities.⁵⁷ The lack of strategic guidance also profoundly affects defense acquisitions, and Iskander Rehman observes that despite the Indian Navy’s concurrent development of a strategic nuclear deterrent force and a modernized aircraft carrier force, “it appears impossible for it to be able to both remain a carrier-centric force and simultaneously pursue its nuclear ambitions [with its current budget].”⁵⁸ The illogical decision to proceed with two mutually exclusive naval development programs will continue, largely due to the fact that “the Defense budget is merely an allocation of funds with no clear relation to any national plan or strategy.”⁵⁹ In sum, within the extant literature there exists a unanimous sentiment that the lack of strategic guidance provided to the military will continue to result in lost opportunities, misguided initiatives, and massive amounts of time and energy wasted in the pursuit of divergent acquisitions programs. Future attempts to increase Indo–U.S. naval cooperation will have to contend with the inefficient and opaque web of Indian strategic decision making.

Lastly, inter-service rivalry has crippled efforts to build a joint capability between India’s armed services, resulting in conflicting lines of effort and a dramatic loss in capability. According to Anit Mukherjee, the development of joint capability has been left to the services to sort out amongst themselves, and “such an approach has not worked in

⁵⁵ Cohen and Dasgupta, 145.

⁵⁶ Pant, “Introduction.”

⁵⁷ Iskander Rehman, “India’s Aspirational Naval Doctrine,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 59.

⁵⁸ Rehman, 65.

⁵⁹ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 144.

practice.”⁶⁰ Inter-service rivalry is largely responsible for the failure of India’s first joint command, the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC). This failure largely negates any strategic benefit the islands provide, despite their advantageous location at a primary maritime choke point. India has thus far even failed to establish an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) centered on the island chain, due to the lack of service cooperation required to station the necessary radar systems and interceptor aircraft for ADIZ enforcement.⁶¹ Observing the disastrous effects of India’s inter-service rivalry, Harsh V. Pant writes, “of all the major armed forces in the world, India is probably the only one not fully integrated.”⁶² Sunil and Dasgupta also observe that “India is some distance away from a Goldwater-Nichols transformation; the present Joint Staff is a token operation.”⁶³ The passing of the Goldwater-Nichols act in the United States is worth mentioning because it was developed and passed by civilian lawmakers, displaying the kind of civilian engagement in military affairs that is sorely lacking within India. Current literature also seems to agree that the lack of joint interoperability between India’s armed services is an embarrassing deficiency, but their ability to conduct joint operations is unlikely to improve barring decisive intervention by India’s civilian leaders.

While the ongoing disconnect between India’s civilian leadership and its armed services continues to hamstring its military capabilities, India’s decades-long policy of non-alignment has similarly plagued its foreign policy. C. Raja Mohan argues that India is still in the midst of a transition away from its self-imposed isolation during the Cold War, with conservatives in Delhi “constrained by the belief that [security partnerships] might violate India’s traditional commitments to state sovereignty and non-alignment.”⁶⁴ Dasgupta and Cohen concur with Mohan, and observe that Mahatma Gandhi and

⁶⁰ Anit Mukherjee, “The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 101.

⁶¹ Mukherjee, “The Unsinkable Aircraft Carrier: The Andaman and Nicobar Islands.”

⁶² Harsh Pant, “India in the Indian Ocean: A Mismatch Between Ambitions and Capabilities?” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 135.

⁶³ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 151.

⁶⁴ Raja Mohan, “India’s Naval Diplomacy: The Unfinished Transitions,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 113.

Jawaharlal Nehru, the two men “with the greatest influence on the direction of independent India,” maintained an almost naive aversion to the use of military force “as an instrument of foreign policy,” and Indian resistance to foreign involvement continues to this day.⁶⁵ Abhijit Singh observes that Indian naval planners are also constrained by the persistence of this mindset, going so far as to “avoid the official use of the term ‘expeditionary’ - in part because of the aversion of their political masters for any military activism that could be construed as interference in the internal affairs of another state.”⁶⁶ While it is generally recognized that India is slowly moving away from its isolationist mindset, institutional barriers to cooperation with foreign powers remain, and will continue to complicate efforts to engage with the Indian government for the foreseeable future.

4. China’s Role in the Emerging Regional Power Dynamics

The state of India’s foreign relations is also one of rapid change, and is heavily influenced by the actions of China and the United States, what C. Raja Mohan characterizes as a ‘triangular maritime dynamic.’⁶⁷ A great deal of writing is concerned with this triangular maritime dynamic, although the discourse tends to focus on the evolving Sino–Indian maritime security dilemma. At its core the emerging Sino–Indian focus on the maritime environment is driven by resources, globalization, and a Mahanian conception of sea power. India’s relationship with China is characterized by the “extension of the traditionally land-based security dilemma into the maritime dimension.”⁶⁸ The Sino–Indian maritime security dilemma is a symptom of the growing maritime interests held by both nations across the Indo-Pacific region, combined with their adherence to a Mahanian concept of naval power that emphasizes the cultivation of naval strength to safeguard vital sea lines of communication. From the Indian perspective, “every advance that China makes in the Indian Ocean undermines India’s own freedom of action in the waters adjoining the

⁶⁵ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming Without Aiming: India’s Military Modernization*, 3.

⁶⁶ Abhijit Singh, “In the Far Seas: Projecting India’s Naval Power,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 66.

⁶⁷ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, chap. 1.

⁶⁸ Collin, “‘New Normal’ in the Indo Pacific: Sino-Indian Maritime Security Dilemma,” 144.

subcontinent,”⁶⁹ a viewpoint that Pant contends is driven by the historic Indian perspective that the “Indian Ocean is its *mare nostrum* ... that the entire triangle of the Indian Ocean is their nation’s rightful and exclusive sphere of influence.”⁷⁰ As the resource needs of both nations expand, it will continue to drive what Mohan describes as “the contest between China and India in their shared periphery.”⁷¹

The Chinese economy’s complete dependence on oil transported through the Indian Ocean has prompted the expansion of PLA(N) deployments into the IOR on a semi-permanent basis, ostensibly to participate in counter-piracy patrols off the Horn of Africa (HOA), in what Probal Ghosh refers to as “a display of strategic reach and sustenance in the strategic backyard of India.”⁷² Although China is investing heavily in expanding overland pipelines to Indian Ocean ports in places such as Myanmar and Pakistan, Mohan argues that these sites are still dependent upon seaborne trade, and that the Chinese emphasis on cultivating a blue-water capability in the Indian Ocean will likely continue.⁷³ The nature of the Chinese projection into the Indian Ocean, however, is a source of disagreement in the extant literature, with Ghosh arguing that the Chinese strategy is part of a concerted Chinese effort to encircle India, a widely held viewpoint within Indian strategic circles referred to as the “String of Pearls” strategy.⁷⁴ More moderate voices characterize the Chinese expansion as far less ambitious, with Mohan identifying the Chinese presence as more akin to the “‘places not bases’ strategy put forward by the U.S. Pacific Command ... in which China would have arrangements in place for access to key facilities in strategic locations ... [without] establishing permanent military bases abroad.”⁷⁵

⁶⁹ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 130.

⁷⁰ Pant, “India in the Indian Ocean: A Mismatch Between Ambitions and Capabilities?” 130.

⁷¹ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 32.

⁷² Ghosh, “Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy,” 112.

⁷³ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 125.

⁷⁴ Ghosh, “Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy,” 112.

⁷⁵ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 127.

Similarly, India has made focused attempts to build closer ties with many Pacific nations on China's maritime periphery, including Vietnam, the Philippines, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia.⁷⁶ This strategic shift toward the Pacific is known within Indian foreign policy circles as the "Look East" policy, which Supriyanto describes as "India's desire to reconnect with South East Asia and the larger Asia-Pacific region in economic and security terms."⁷⁷ Mohan clarifies that India's move into the Pacific "is not about matching the military weight of China in the littoral. It is about generating strategic options that did not previously exist for the littoral states of the western Pacific."⁷⁸ India's efforts are aided by the widespread perception of India as a benign power "without territorial ambitions or designs in South East Asia," and its ability to offer a strategic alternative to nations that want to avoid aligning with either China or the United States.⁷⁹ The generally positive reception India enjoys in South East Asia stands in contrast to China's "eroding ... facade of being a responsible 'growing power'... evidenced in their current aggressive posturing mainly in the South China Sea."⁸⁰

The South China Sea (SCS) represents another point of friction in Sino-Indian relations, where China claims the SCS as its territorial waters, a position it justifies by claiming that the SCS represents the historical waters of the Chinese people, referring to a boundary known as the "Nine-Dash Line" as historical evidence.⁸¹ Hong Nong asserts that "the basis of this theory is comparatively weak in international law, and has been criticized even by some Chinese scholars."⁸² The SCS is an increasingly volatile maritime environment, and an area where India has "strongly affirmed its support to the principle of

⁷⁶ Ghosh, "Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy," 117.

⁷⁷ Ristian Supriyanto, "A Sea of Opportunities: South East Asia's Growing Naval Cooperation with India," in *India's Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 193.

⁷⁸ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, chap. 6.

⁷⁹ Supriyanto, "A Sea of Opportunities: South East Asia's Growing Naval Cooperation with India," 207.

⁸⁰ Ghosh, "Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy," 118.

⁸¹ Hong Nong, "Maritime Disputes in the Asia-Pacific—A Chinese View," in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 65.

⁸² Nong, 65.

freedom of navigation in the contested waters, signaled empathy with the Philippines, and declared its commitment to deepen the strategic partnership with Vietnam.”⁸³ Through its affirmation of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and declared support for the Philippines and Vietnam, India is also indirectly challenging China’s claim to the SCS, a stance that Ghosh claims might bring India into direct opposition with the PLA(N), “especially in areas like the South China Sea where the Chinese have opposed the exploration of the ONGC Videsh’s bid to explore for oil in the Vietnamese EEZ.”⁸⁴

China’s aggressive posturing in the SCS has also alarmed Japanese leaders, and prompted the Japanese Cabinet under Shinzo Abe to pursue a more activist approach to security policy in an effort to prevent the SCS from becoming “Lake Beijing.”⁸⁵ According to Kiyota, China’s assertive posture has driven Japan and India into a security relationship as a “hedge against Chinese influence.”⁸⁶ The closeness of the India-Japan relationship is, thus, largely driven by Chinese expansion, and is continually growing. Japan also affirmed its commitment to “democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights,”⁸⁷ thereby aligning Japan’s stated foreign policy objectives with India’s, in what amounted to a second indirect criticism of China’s illiberal expansion. Although India-Japan relations constitute a comparatively small portion of the literature, the closeness of the relationship serves to incentivize India’s alignment with the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific region, due to Japan’s significant defense relationship with the United States and Abe’s desire to organize a “Democratic Security Diamond” in the Indo-Pacific.⁸⁸

⁸³ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 251.

⁸⁴ Ghosh, “Sea Dragon at the Doorstep: PLA(N) Modernization and the Indian Navy,” 107.

⁸⁵ Tomoko Kiyota, “Japan’s South China Sea Conundrum,” in *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific* (Kalpana Shukla, 2014), 73.

⁸⁶ Tomoko Kiyota, “Looming Over the Horizon: Japan’s Naval Engagement with India,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 178.

⁸⁷ Kiyota, “Japan’s South China Sea Conundrum,” 73.

⁸⁸ Kiyota, 73.

In sum, the Indo-Pacific region is emerging as the central arena for great-power competition in the 21st century, and the U.S.–India strategic partnership is driven by a complex array of internal strategic objectives and external security concerns. The United States and India approach the region from vastly different perspectives and historical experiences, but share a concern for China’s growth and its implications for the region. This literature review introduced many of the salient topics and academic voices that will emerge in later chapters, including the region’s importance to the U.S. and India and the centrality of the maritime domain, the role that China plays in the emerging U.S.–India strategic partnership, the unique domestic factors and historic legacies influencing Indian decision-making, and the U.S. approach to the region.

C. RESEARCH DESIGN

This thesis examines the role that naval cooperation plays in the U.S.–India strategic partnership by examining the Indo-Pacific region and its dynamics from two perspectives. These examinations provide the historical background and context necessary to evaluate why the United States is pursuing naval cooperation with India. The first examination adopts a U.S.-centric perspective and explores the strategic objectives of the United States in the Indo-Pacific region and the threat China poses to these interests. It then chronicles U.S.–Indian relations from a U.S. viewpoint and explains the U.S. rationale behind furthering defense cooperation with India. The second mirrors the first, albeit from an Indian perspective. It outlines India’s strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region and explains the threat China poses to Indian interests, before recounting the history of U.S.–Indian relations through an Indian lens. This examination of U.S. and Indian relations and objectives serves to provide the historical and geographic context necessary to analyze why the U.S. is pursuing naval cooperation with India, scrutinizing the utility of naval cooperation in furthering the U.S.–India strategic partnership.

D. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESES

The central hypothesis of this research is that naval cooperation likely serves as the most accessible and worthwhile mechanism for advancing the strategic interests of the United States and India given that China’s expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific is defined

by its increasing naval presence,⁸⁹ and given that the interests of both India⁹⁰ and the United States⁹¹ in the Indo-Pacific region are maritime in nature. Naval cooperation seems to provide the United States and India with an apparatus to increase their military-to-military cooperation, while simultaneously enhancing their capacity to resist China's expansion by sharing tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs), sharing the burden of patrolling SLOCs, and protecting the international norms outlined in the UNCLOS.⁹² If conducted attentively, naval cooperation is likely to be particularly appealing to India given its past relationship with the United States, and its conception of itself as a great power.

E. CHAPTER OUTLINE

The central objective of Chapter II is to furnish a detailed account of the role China and India play in the U.S. approach to the Indo-Pacific region. This chapter adopts a U.S.-centric perspective toward the Indo-Pacific region. It begins by providing a broad overview of U.S. interests in the Indo-Pacific region, drawing upon U.S. strategic policy documents and the statements of key U.S. leaders. The chapter then presents a short history of Sino–U.S. relations and illustrates how China's rise is perceived as threatening by U.S. leaders. The final section of this chapter analyzes Indo–U.S. relations from the U.S. viewpoint, before explaining the role that U.S. leaders envision India playing in the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy. This chapter's study of the United States and its interests forms a critical part of the examination of why the U.S. should further naval cooperation with India in Chapter IV.

Similarly, Chapter III utilizes historical studies to illuminate India's approach to the Indo-Pacific region. The chapter begins by studying India's strategic interests in the

⁸⁹ Jun J. Nohara, "Sea Power as a Dominant Paradigm: The Rise of China's New Strategic Identity," *Journal of Contemporary East Asian Studies* 6, no. 2 (July 3, 2017): 224, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24761028.2017.1391623>.

⁹⁰ David Brewster, "The Expansion of India's Security Sphere," in *The Oxford Handbook of India's National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 504.

⁹¹ Mark Manyin et al., *Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's "Rebalancing" Toward Asia* (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2012), 5.

⁹² Bonnie Glaser, "China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order" (The Institute for Southeast Asian Studies—Yushof Ishak Institute, April 5, 2019), https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_21.pdf.

Indo-Pacific, which are more narrowly focused on the IOR. This section will also explain how India's approach to achieving its regional objectives is profoundly influenced by its long-term security challenges, which shape the trajectory of its military strategy. Next, this chapter provides a detailed history of Sino-Indian relations and the Sino-Indian security dilemma, which is critical to understanding the power dynamics within the IOR. Lastly, this chapter explains how India's relations with the United States have evolved from "distanced democracies" to "natural allies."⁹³ Understanding the tumultuous history of Indo-U.S. relations from an Indian viewpoint enables a holistic appraisal of naval cooperation in Chapter IV.

Chapter IV incorporates the lessons learned from previous chapters into a comprehensive evaluation of why the United States should further naval cooperation with India. This evaluation analyzes how naval cooperation might further the strategic objectives of both nations. As part of this evaluation, this chapter studies the merits of naval cooperation and explores how naval cooperation might provide an accessible, scalable, and fruitful means of furthering the Indo-U.S. defense relationship.

The thesis concludes in Chapter V by offering specific policy recommendations regarding the U.S. approach toward naval cooperation with India, and identifying areas for further studies. These policy recommendations are directed toward U.S. policymakers and military leaders, and include not only specific actions that should be taken to advance the Indo-U.S. relationship but also common pitfalls that have plagued U.S. efforts to engage with India in the past.

⁹³ Dipankar Banerjee, "An Overview of Indo-US Strategic Cooperation," in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61.

II. THE INDO-PACIFIC IN THE U.S. STRATEGIC CALCULUS

As it slowly disentangles itself from decades of conflict in the Middle East, the United States is adapting its strategic priorities to a new reality as the global balance of power and wealth shifts toward the Indo-Pacific region. In particular, the United States seeks to protect its economic and military interests in the region, which are increasingly threatened by an ascending China. In pursuit of this goal, U.S. leaders increasingly view India as a key regional partner and strategic counterbalance to China and have made a persistent effort to improve relations with India. Many of these efforts involve naval cooperation, which U.S. leaders seem to have embraced as a preferred mechanism for advancing military cooperation with India and furthering U.S. strategic objectives in the region. This chapter provides an overview of U.S. aims and perspectives in the Indo-Pacific, and serves as the first half of a two-part study of the U.S.–India defense relationship that will be used to produce an assessment of why the United States should pursue naval cooperation with India in Chapter IV. It begins with an overview of U.S. strategic priorities before analyzing the effect of China’s growth on those priorities. The second portion of this chapter then shifts its focus toward India, and provides a history of the U.S.–Indian relationship, before describing the potential role that the relationship might play in supporting U.S. regional objectives.

A. CURRENT U.S. STRATEGIC PRIORITIES IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Beginning in 2011 under President Barack Obama, the United States began to focus attention on the Indo-Pacific region, then referred to as the “Asia Pacific Region” in U.S. policy documents.⁹⁴ Both Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and President Obama publicly affirmed the United States’ commitment to an “open and rules-based system”⁹⁵ in the Pacific region, while also declaring the country’s intention to bolster its military presence

⁹⁴ Andrew C. Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma at Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 175.

⁹⁵ Hillary Clinton, “America’s Pacific Century,” *Foreign Policy*, November 2011.

there. The Obama administration's pivot to the Pacific was a response to the growing consensus among U.S. academic circles that Asia represented the new "center of gravity for U.S. foreign policy, national security, and economic interests."⁹⁶ Today, as the concentration of world wealth, economic output, and military forces shifts to the Indo-Pacific region, it is only natural that the United States, as the world's largest economy, would need to adapt its foreign policy to follow suit. This overarching policy change can be most effectively characterized as a "region-wide multidimensional policy initiative" designed to prepare the United States for continued economic, social, political, and military primacy in the 21st century.⁹⁷

While President Donald Trump maintains a much more hawkish stance toward the conduct of China and Russia in the region, his administration's strategic priorities toward the Indo-Pacific region remain relatively unchanged from those of the Obama years.⁹⁸ The United States continues to recognize the critical importance of the region and remains committed to preserving the rules-based status quo that has existed since the end of World War Two. In this policy, the United States has three major strategic objectives: to strengthen and build its network of allies and partners in the region,⁹⁹ to challenge maritime claims inconsistent with international law,¹⁰⁰ and to maintain a favorable balance of power in the region.¹⁰¹

First, the United States maintains a robust network of allies in the Indo-Pacific region, including Japan, South Korea, Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand, and it continues to invest in strengthening ties with states it refers to as *security partners*, a term used by U.S. policymakers to refer to states with which the United States shares a close

⁹⁶ Mark Manyin et al., "Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration's 'Rebalancing' Toward Asia" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, March 28, 2012).

⁹⁷ Robert G. Sutter et al., "Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability" (The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs, August 2013), 2.

⁹⁸ Winner, "The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans," 175.

⁹⁹ Patrick Shanahan, *The Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2019), 21.

¹⁰⁰ Shanahan, 3–4.

¹⁰¹ Shanahan, 16.

working relationship but without a formal alliance.¹⁰² The list of U.S. regional security partners includes Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Bangladesh, and India.¹⁰³ Among the states the United States considers security partners, India occupies a special place as the only non-allied relationship the United States refers to as a “Major Defense Partnership,”¹⁰⁴ a distinction intended to convey to Indian policymakers the importance of U.S.–India defense cooperation in the United States’ strategic calculus. Not only is strengthening this network of allies and partners an important part of the United States’ military planning, but it also constitutes a critical component of the United States’ effort to prevent China from effectively wielding political and economic pressure to isolate and exploit its smaller regional neighbors.

The second critical U.S. strategic initiative in the Indo-Pacific is the ongoing effort to challenge maritime claims made by coastal states which violate the international standards set forth in the UNCLOS.¹⁰⁵ These operations are part of the United States’ Freedom of Navigation (FON) program,¹⁰⁶ which coordinates actions between the United States Department of State and the Department of Defense to ensure that maritime claims in violation of the UNCLOS are regularly disputed. To this end, the DoD conducts Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOP), which are military maneuvers typically carried out by Air Force or Navy units that enter a disputed area and conduct routine operations in an effort to demonstrate the inefficacy of the illegal claims. While these operations have been conducted around the globe since 1979, they have recently increased in frequency in the South China Sea, where China has intensified its efforts to assert control over seaspace falling within its arbitrary “Nine-Dash Line” boundary.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰² Shanahan, 21.

¹⁰³ Shanahan, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Shanahan, 21.

¹⁰⁵ Harry Harris, “U.S. Pacific Command Posture,” § House Armed Services Committee (2018), 11.

¹⁰⁶ “U.S. Department of Defense Freedom of Navigation (FON) Program,” U.S. Department of Defense, February 28, 2017, <https://policy.defense.gov/Portals/11/DoD%20FON%20Program%20Summary%202016.pdf?ver=2017-03-03-141350-380>

¹⁰⁷ Florian Dupuy and Marie Marie-Dupuy, “A Legal Analysis of China’s Historic Rights Claim in the South China Sea,” *The American Journal of International Law* 107, no. 1 (January 2013): 124–41, <https://doi.org/10.5305/amerjintelaw.107.1.0124>.

Lastly, the United States endeavors to maintain an advantageous balance of power in the Indo-Pacific region, a strategic goal designed to ensure that the combined combat power of the United States and its allies keeps pace with increases in Chinese and Russian military strength. However, the ongoing demand for forces in the United States Central Command area of operations (AOR) to counter Iranian aggression and the ongoing fight against violent extremist organizations (VEO) continues to hamper U.S. efforts to “rebalance” toward Asia,¹⁰⁸ and projected decreases in deployable U.S. Navy combatants in the near-term will also affect U.S. efforts to maintain a favorable balance of power.¹⁰⁹ For these reasons, unifying the combat power and resources of U.S. allies and partners in the region will be critically important, and successfully managing relationships with key U.S. allies will have an outsized effect on the regional balance of power. The establishment of a semi-permanent U.S. Marine Corps detachment in Darwin, Australia is a salient example of leveraging allied support to favorably enhance U.S. posture in the Indo-Pacific, and with the United States Navy’s decision to allocate 60 percent of U.S. naval capabilities to the region, the United States will undoubtedly look to arrange for additional rotational basing agreements and opportunities for cooperation.¹¹⁰

B. THE ROLE OF A RISING CHINA

While it would be overly simplistic to characterize the American strategic rebalance toward the Indo-Pacific region as solely motivated by China’s ascent, China does occupy a central position in the United States’ strategic calculus for three reasons: first, the sheer size and growth of the Chinese economy places it third in the world in GDP size behind the United States and the European Union, which gives China significant influence over the global economy.¹¹¹ Second, China’s rapid military buildup has altered the balance of

¹⁰⁸ Manyin et al., “Pivot to the Pacific? The Obama Administration’s ‘Rebalancing’ Toward Asia,” 15.

¹⁰⁹ Philip Davidson, “Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture,” § House Armed Services Committee (2019), 14.

¹¹⁰ Sutter et al., “Balancing Acts: The U.S. Rebalance and Asia-Pacific Stability,” 12.

¹¹¹ “World Bank National Accounts Data—GDP” (The World Bank, 2018), <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD?locations=EU-US-CN>.

power in Asia, threatening the military primacy of the United States and its allies and ushering in an era of renewed great-power competition.¹¹² Lastly, statements made by China's top leaders and its disregard of the rulings and laws of international institutions such as the UNCLOS Tribunal, indicate that China seeks to challenge the current rules-based international order which the United States and its allies have defended and maintained since the end of World War Two.¹¹³ These three factors all contribute to a growing unease within the United States regarding the potential threat China poses to American hegemony.

The rapid economic growth that enabled China's rise began in the mid-1970s. Following the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, China embarked on a decades-long process of reform, resulting in its gradual implementation of a market economy and integration with the world economy. Throughout this period, China adopted a reserved foreign policy and an inward focus, summed up by Deng Xiaoping's aphorism "conceal our capabilities, be good at keeping a low profile, and never become the leader, generating no confrontation."¹¹⁴ Deng's successor, Jiang Zemin, similarly stated that China should "enhance trust ... develop cooperation, and avoid confrontation."¹¹⁵ China's policy of internal reform and growth coupled with a restrained foreign policy continued through the tenures of Jiang Zemin (1989–2002) and Hu Jintao (2002–2012) but reached an inflection point with the rise of Xi Jinping in 2012.¹¹⁶ Since assuming power, Xi Jinping has promoted an increasingly ambitious and assertive Chinese stance on the world stage,

¹¹² James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, "Taking Stock of China's Growing Navy: The Death and Life of Surface Fleets," *Orbis* 61, no. 2 (January 1, 2017): 269–85, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2017.02.010>.

¹¹³ Bonnie Glaser, "China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order," ISEAS, April 5, 2019, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_21.pdf.

¹¹⁴ Christopher A. Ford, *China Looks at the West: Identity, Global Ambitions, and the Future of Sino-American Relations* (Lexington, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), 198.

¹¹⁵ Ford, 198.

¹¹⁶ Ford.

evidenced by China's massive yearly increases in military and foreign aid spending under Xi's leadership.¹¹⁷

This ambition is worrisome to the United States because, despite its embrace of capitalism and exposure to market forces, China "has rejected both the move toward democracy and the acceptance of human and civil rights that Americans had hoped would emerge from China's astonishing economic rise."¹¹⁸ The Chinese Communist Party continues to maintain complete control over the Chinese population, contrary to research that suggested a liberal market economy and economic growth would drive reform and liberalization within authoritarian states.¹¹⁹ China's lack of liberal reforms raises serious concerns within the United States and Europe as China's success, far from ushering in a wave of liberal political reform, threatens to legitimize the notion that an authoritarian political model can yield economic growth that equals or surpasses that of liberal democracy. China continues to leverage its considerable economic strength to further its national interests at the expense of its trading partners and regional neighbors, using a wide range of mercantilist policies to maintain a substantial trade surplus with much of the world and advantage Chinese companies on the global market.¹²⁰

China's rapidly increasing wealth and economic status has permitted a similarly swift increase in its military budget. China began an ambitious naval construction program beginning with the end of the ninth Five-Year Plan in 2000, aiming to build its capability to sustain "blue-water" operations within the first and second island chains ... while enabling 'far-seas' deployments around much of the globe."¹²¹ The People's Liberation

¹¹⁷ Nien-chung Chang Liao, "Winds of Change: Assessing China's Assertive Turn in Foreign Policy," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 53, no. 6 (2018): 880–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021909618762477>.

¹¹⁸ Andrew J. Nathan, "China's Challenge," in *Authoritarianism Goes Global: The Challenge to Democracy* (Baltimore, United States: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), 23, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ebook-nps/detail.action?docID=4509316>.

¹¹⁹ Carles Boix and Susan C. Stokes, "Endogenous Democratization," *World Politics* 55, no. 4 (2003): 517–49.

¹²⁰ Adams Nager, "Calling Out China's Mercantilism," *The International Economy* 30, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 62–64.

¹²¹ Ronald O'Rourke, "China Naval Modernization: Implications for U.S. Navy Capabilities—Background and Issues for Congress," Congressional Research Service (Washington, D.C., August 1, 2018), 2, www.crs.gov.

Army Navy (PLAN) forms an important part of China's efforts to assert control over its territorial claims in the South China Sea (SCS) and East China Sea (ECS), "defend China's commercial sea lines of communication (SLOCs), particularly those linking China to the Middle East, and [assert] China's status as a leading regional power and major world power."¹²² Given the significant economic importance of the Indian Ocean to the Chinese economy, the PLAN has increased its operations in these waters as well. Robert Kaplan refers to this trend as the beginning of a Chinese "Two Ocean Strategy," where China gradually builds the strength and capability to supplant the United States as the dominant naval power in both the Western Pacific and Indian Oceans.¹²³ While Chinese leaders are characteristically tight-lipped about their military ambitions, XI Jinping has publicly stated his belief that "it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia ... [and] uphold the security of Asia," which many in the international community interpreted as a message to Western powers that China intends to create a "new security order" in Asia.¹²⁴

As it grows in strength, China is likely to increase its efforts to promote authoritarian values and work to undermine and revise the liberal democratic international order, a process that is already well underway.¹²⁵ Statements made by Xi Jinping lend credence to this prediction, with Xi in 2017 stating China's intention to "actively take part in reforming and constructing the global governance system."¹²⁶ This process is apparent in China's efforts to influence norms and language within the United Nations, such as its proposal to remove the terms "freedom of expression" and "democratic" from the UN's International Code of Conduct for Information Security.¹²⁷ In addition to these efforts, China is in the process of establishing a wide range of parallel international institutions

¹²² O'Rourke, 5–6.

¹²³ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011), 293.

¹²⁴ Bonnie Glaser, "China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order" (The Institute for Southeast Asian Studies—Yushof Ishak Institute, April 5, 2019), 3, https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2019_21.pdf.

¹²⁵ Nathan, "China's Challenge."

¹²⁶ Glaser, "China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order."

¹²⁷ Glaser, 6.

designed to weaken “the dominant position of Western currencies and Western-led international organizations.”¹²⁸

China’s revisionist objectives target what the Institute for Southeast Asian Studies refers to as the “three pillars” of the current international order: Western institutions, the United States’ system of global alliances, and the established set of values and norms upheld by these institutions.¹²⁹ The threat to this international order posed by China’s rise has driven a renewed interest between India, Japan, Australia and the United States in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.¹³⁰ Of particular concern to all members of the Quad is China’s ongoing Belt and Road initiative, a massive foreign investment plan designed to construct a global infrastructure for information and commerce, with China at its center.¹³¹ This project is characterized by some as “an overt expression of China’s power ambitions in the 21st century.”¹³² While threat perceptions between the four states vary, “the interests of the four Quad countries are converging” due to China’s increasingly disruptive actions, and the first meeting of the Quad in November, 2017 addressed issues of mutual concern such as freedom of navigation, maritime security, and respect for international law.¹³³ The growing strategic convergence between these and other Indo-Pacific states will likely continue and perhaps accelerate so long as China continues to challenge international norms and pursue an assertive foreign policy abroad.

The era of great-power competition (GPC) between the United States and China has significant implications for the United States Navy, which was not the case during the

¹²⁸ Sebastian Heilmann et al., “China’s Shadow Foreign Policy: Parallel Structures Challenge the Established International Order,” *China Monitor* (Berlin, Germany: Mercator Institute for China Studies, October 28, 2014).

¹²⁹ Glaser, “China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order.”

¹³⁰ Jesse Barker Gale and Andrew Shearer, “The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” *CSIS Brief* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 2018).

¹³¹ “Belt and Road Initiative,” World Bank, accessed October 23, 2018, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹³² Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative,” *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder* (Council on Foreign Relations, May 21, 2019), <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/brief/belt-and-road-initiative>.

¹³³ Gale and Shearer, “The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative.”

last era of GPC between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold War was not defined by the sea, because the central area of contention between the two states was continental Europe. Conversely, GPC between the United States and China does not revolve around continental borders; rather, it is a battle for influence and control over the resources and nations spread across the Indian and Pacific oceans. For this reason, the maritime domain has emerged as the primary arena for great-power competition between China and the United States. Rather than preparing to blunt a Soviet armored assault through the Fulda gap, U.S. military planners today are tasked with developing plans to push into the South and East China Sea should China ever attempt to deny the United States and its allies access to those waters.

C. INDIA FROM THE U.S. PERSPECTIVE

As the United States adapts its strategic objectives to meet China's rising challenge, U.S. strategic planners increasingly view India as a natural ally. U.S.–Indian relations have long been defined by the influence of third parties on U.S. decision making, and the current warming of U.S.–Indian relations is no different. U.S.–Indian relations during the 20th century were fraught with mutual distrust and misunderstanding caused by U.S. Cold-War policies and its support for the Pakistani military. It was not until the signing of the landmark India-U.S. Civil Nuclear Agreement in 2006 that the two countries built stable if not truly friendly relations, which have expanded in recent years out of a shared concern over Chinese regional ambitions.

U.S.–Indian relations were first complicated by the involvement of a third party even before the birth of the Indian state. As the Indian independence movement gained momentum through the 1930s, the world's major powers moved closer to war. Upon the outset of World War Two, the United States found itself torn between supporting the Indian independence movement and supporting its principal wartime ally, Great Britain. While the Indian independence movement's anti-colonialist message resonated within the United States, American "attempt [s] to mediate the transfer of power [were] 'wrathfully received'

by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill.”¹³⁴ Ultimately, the United States would drop its support for the Indian independence movement, a move born out of the United States’ prioritization of its relationship with Great Britain. This left a bitter taste in the mouths of pro-independence Indian leaders and resulted in a lingering association in India between the United States and Imperialism.¹³⁵

Following the conclusion of World War Two, U.S. strategy shifted to one of containment, with its principal concern being preventing the expansion of Communism into former European colonies in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.¹³⁶ Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru’s policy of non-alignment was viewed by the United States as a major obstacle in its efforts to draw Asian states into its anti-communist camp, and Nehru further rankled U.S. policymakers with his “failure to condemn communist aggression in Korea and Hungary,” which led to a consensus among U.S. leaders that Nehru was “clearly pro-Russian.”¹³⁷ By contrast, the United States came to view Pakistan as a reliable and potentially valuable ally in combating Soviet expansion into South Asia due to its willingness to align itself with the United States and its support for U.S. objectives. This led to the signing of the United States-Pakistan Mutual Defense Assistance Agreement in 1954, which saw hundreds of millions of dollars in U.S. defense aid flow into Pakistan and strengthened the United States’ perception that Pakistan was its security partner of choice on the subcontinent.¹³⁸ Thus, U.S.–Indian relations during the 1950s were dictated by the United States’ desire to contain Soviet expansion, and the “with us or against us” attitude that prevailed among U.S. leaders proved to be incompatible with Indian non-alignment.

Although U.S. perceptions of India were hampered by India’s nonalignment policy during the 1950s, increasing tensions between India and China in the early 1960s prompted

¹³⁴ Arthur Rubinoff, “Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India,” in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 41.

¹³⁵ Rubinoff, 41.

¹³⁶ Rubinoff, 41.

¹³⁷ Rubinoff, 42.

¹³⁸ Paul J. Smith, “The China–Pakistan–United States Strategic Triangle: From Cold War to the ‘War on Terrorism,’” *Asian Affairs: An American Review* 38, no. 4 (October 1, 2011): 200, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00927678.2011.604291>.

a warming of U.S.–Indian relations, as U.S. policymakers viewed India’s strong stance against communist China favorably.¹³⁹ The perception that India served as a counterbalance to China was embraced by President John F. Kennedy, who criticized the “rigid system of alliances against communism ... [which seemed] likely to diminish Western influence over non-Communist nations” and lent his full support to India during the conflict.¹⁴⁰ During the Sino–Indian war of 1962, U.S. support took the form of a significant airlift of military supplies to India and U.S. diplomatic intervention to prevent Pakistan from attacking a weakened and preoccupied India.¹⁴¹ This rapid pivot to aiding India under Kennedy’s term was short lived, however, and the 1965 Indo–Pakistani war provided the U.S. with a justification to end military aid to the subcontinent in a subsequent arms embargo imposed on both India and Pakistan.¹⁴²

Following the 1965 Indo–Pakistani war, U.S. policymakers largely shifted their foreign policy focus away from the subcontinent and toward the growing conflict in Vietnam. President Nixon secretly began to pursue rapprochement with China in an effort to “undermine alliances between Communist countries, diplomatically isolate North Vietnam, and increase U.S. leverage against the Soviet Union.”¹⁴³ This move required the close cooperation of Pakistani President Yahya Khan, who leveraged his close relations with both China and the United States to establish communications between Nixon and Chairman Mao Zedong. The process of normalizing relations between the United States and China had the added effect of drawing the United States closer to Pakistan, while alienating India, which had cultivated a closer defense relationship with the USSR following the United States’ arms embargo enacted in 1965.

¹³⁹ Rubinoff, “Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India,” 43.

¹⁴⁰ Syed Soherwordi, “US Foreign Policy Shift Towards Pakistan Between 1965 & 1971 Pak-India Wars,” *South Asian Studies* 25, no. 1 (June 2010): 7.

¹⁴¹ Bruce O. Riedel, *JFK’s Forgotten Crisis: Tibet, the CIA, and Sino-Indian War*, 1st ed. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2015).

¹⁴² Stephen Cohen, “India and America: An Emerging Relationship” (The Conference on The Nation-State System and Transnational Forces in South Asia, Kyoto, Japan, December 8, 2000), 7.

¹⁴³ Office of the Historian, Foreign Service Institute, U.S. Department of State, “Milestones: 1969–1976—Office of the Historian,” Government website, U.S. Department of State, accessed August 16, 2019, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/rapprochement-china>.

The year 1971 saw the most rapid deterioration of the U.S.–Indian relationship, largely due to the Nixon administration’s favorable view of Pakistan and increasing U.S. perceptions that India was aligned with the USSR. During this period Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger came to view Pakistan as a crucial U.S. ally given its central role in the ongoing Sino–U.S. rapprochement, while growing increasingly wary of India’s close relationship with the USSR.¹⁴⁴ The Nixon administration’s hostility toward India during the Indo–Pakistani war of 1971 was on full display when Nixon ordered U.S. Navy Task Force 74, containing the USS Enterprise, to the Bay of Bengal as a show of force to deter further Indian aggression against Pakistan.¹⁴⁵ Largely negative relations between the United States and India continued through the 1970s, with the United States strongly condemning India’s 1974 nuclear detonation and Indira Gandhi’s suppression of human rights from June 1975 to March 1977.¹⁴⁶ Stephen Cohen explains that while South Asia “might have been the *site* of Cold War competition, it was not consistently judged to be vital territory,” and U.S. effort was largely focused on areas deemed to be of more immediate strategic importance, namely, East Asia, Europe, and the Middle East.¹⁴⁷

The latter half of the 1970s and into the 1980s was a period of benign neglect in U.S.–Indian relations, with U.S.–India ties hampered by the United States’ commitment to nonproliferation and its close relationship with Pakistan via the Soviet-Afghan war. The United States would not be compelled to readdress its relationship with India in any substantive way until the India-Pakistan crisis in 1990, where the international community harbored a “strong disposition for the United States ... to assume the leadership role” in defusing the crisis, due to its status as the sole world superpower following the collapse of the USSR.¹⁴⁸ Throughout the 1990s, U.S. views of India were defined by the issue of nonproliferation, and while India’s close association with the USSR was no longer a major

¹⁴⁴ Rubinoff, “Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India,” 44.

¹⁴⁵ Raghavendra Mishra, “Revisiting the 1971 ‘USS Enterprise Incident’: Rhetoric, Reality, and Pointers for the Contemporary Era,” *Journal of Defence Studies* 9, no. 2 (June 2015): 49–80.

¹⁴⁶ Rubinoff, “Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India,” 45.

¹⁴⁷ Cohen, “India and America: An Emerging Relationship,” 12.

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, 13.

point of contention for U.S. policymakers, India's continued efforts to develop nuclear weapons were met with consternation amongst U.S. leaders. Rising tensions between India and Pakistan quickly attracted U.S. involvement, and U.S.–Indian relations during this period were again heavily influenced by a third party, in this case Pakistan.

U.S. perceptions of India reached a crisis point in 1998, when India tested five nuclear devices as part of its escalating nuclear arms race with Pakistan, in defiance of U.S. sanctions and diplomatic efforts to arrest the progression of its nuclear program. The confrontation over India's nuclear weapons program prompted some U.S. policymakers to view New Delhi "as a potential military opponent, taking seriously the claims of the BJP ... that Delhi could join with others in challenging American hegemony."¹⁴⁹ The immediate effect of India's nuclear tests in 1998 was to galvanize U.S. policymakers into imposing immediate sanctions on India, however, the United States waived sanctions imposed on India for its nuclear weapons program beginning within a year. This retreat from its decades-long nonproliferation policy provided Washington with an opportunity to engage in constructive dialogue with India to diffuse the Kargil crisis between India and Pakistan in 1999.¹⁵⁰ This effort was aided by the widespread U.S. perception that the 1999 crisis was largely the result of Pakistani provocation.¹⁵¹ After 1999, both the Clinton administration and influential leaders within the United States Congress began to view India in an increasingly positive light, and India's status as one of South Asia's only functional democracies, combined with its enormous economic potential, drove the two states together.¹⁵²

The Bush administration embraced the prospect of enhancing bilateral ties with India and negotiated a sweeping nuclear agreement between 2005 and 2008¹⁵³ that ushered

¹⁴⁹ Cohen, 14.

¹⁵⁰ Rubinoff, "Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India," 51.

¹⁵¹ Dipankar Banerjee, "An Overview of Indo-US Strategic Cooperation," in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 61–81.

¹⁵² Arthur Rubinoff, "Incompatible Objectives and Shortsighted Policies: U.S. Strategies Toward India," in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 51–52.

¹⁵³ George Perkovich, "Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal," *Daedalus* 139, No.1, no. 2 (January 2010): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1162/daed.2010.139.1.20>.

in a wave of friendly bilateral relations between the United States and India. In a departure from the historically tumultuous nature of U.S.–India ties, relations continued on a generally upward trajectory through the Obama administration and into the Trump administration. The landmark sale of eight cutting-edge Boeing P-8I maritime patrol aircraft to India in 2009, combined with the signing of the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018, are evidence of the steady growth of U.S.–India defense relations. India remains committed to its policy of avoiding alliances with formal powers, and for this reason, “the Indo–US relationship today is best described as an evolving entente, rather than an alliance.”¹⁵⁴ The future of U.S.–Indian relations is likely to be determined by China’s actions on the world stage, with an assertive China being a major factor in accelerating U.S.–India cooperation.

D. INDIA’S PLACE IN THE UNITED STATES’ INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

Within the Indo-Pacific, the United States seeks to strengthen and build its network of allies and partners, challenge maritime claims inconsistent with international law, and maintain a favorable balance of power in the region. As the maritime trade routes through the Indian Ocean and South China Sea continue to grow in both size and importance, the Indian ocean is a natural avenue of Chinese expansion.¹⁵⁵ Chinese naval expansion into the Indian Ocean represents an issue where the interests of both India and the United States converge, as both nations have a strong interest in preventing the spread of Chinese influence in the region. In the eyes of many U.S. strategic planners, India’s commanding presence at the center of the Indian ocean, its sizeable navy, and its stated commitment to a rules-based international order make it an invaluable partner for the U.S.

A closer defense relationship with India could help the United States strengthen and build its network of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific. India maintains positive relations with many Asian states that the United States would also like to work more closely

¹⁵⁴ Devin T Hagerty, “Are We Present At The Creation? Alliance Theory and the Indo-US Strategic Convergence,” in *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 12.

¹⁵⁵ Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*.

with, like Vietnam, and India has the advantage of possessing a reputation as a relatively benign power thanks to its decades-long policy of nonalignment and aversion to foreign military intervention. Building a closer defense relationship with India has the potential to open doors to Indo-Pacific states that have reservations with cooperating with the United States but would more willingly open up to closer cooperation with India. India also maintains friendly relations with current U.S. allies, such as Japan, simplifying the process of organizing multinational exercises and maritime security operations.

Partnering with India could also help U.S. efforts to support a rules-based international order through its freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs). The United States uses FONOPs to challenge China's illegal claims in the South China Sea, and normalizing operations near China's artificial islands are critical if the United States and its allies hope to prevent these claims from gaining widespread acceptance. While FONOPS are not solely directed at China, the operations that target Chinese claims receive widespread condemnation by China and are the most high-visibility FONOPS currently conducted. Closer maritime cooperation with India raises the prospect of offloading some of the burden of patrolling sea lanes and maintaining maritime security in the Indian Ocean to the Indian Navy, which is eager to assume responsibility for an area regarded as India's strategic backyard.¹⁵⁶ This could reduce the operational demands placed on the United States Navy in the Indo Pacific and make more surface vessels available for conducting the sensitive and politically volatile freedom of navigation operations. While the United States ultimately seeks to persuade its allies and partners to join its efforts to operate inside China's illegal claims, this is a long-term goal that is still under development. Shifting the burden of routine patrol operations to partners like India will still contribute significantly to U.S. capacity to conduct FONOPS in the interim.

Finally, a partnership with India would assist the United States in achieving its third strategic objective, which is maintaining a favorable balance of power in the region, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. The rapid pace of China's naval construction program

¹⁵⁶ Manjeet S. Pardesi, "India's Conventional Military Strategy," in *The Oxford Handbook of India's National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 125.

will likely enable China's PLA(N) to gain numerical superiority over the United States Navy in the near future, however this is of less concern to U.S. naval leaders, who account for the significant capabilities that U.S. allies in the region bring to bear. Over a decade ago, U.S. Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Mullen announced his plan to build a multinational "1000 ship navy" through the close integration of allies and partners, and while this term has fallen from use, its core concept is still relevant today. The substantial size and proficiency of the Indian Navy, combined with India's aspirations to continue expanding its naval capabilities, make it an important partner in U.S. plans to leverage partner nation capabilities to maintain a favorable balance of power against potential adversaries like China.

III. THE INDO-PACIFIC THROUGH AN INDIAN LENS

India's security interests, unlike the global concerns of the United States, are more narrowly focused within the Indo-Pacific region. Its strategic perspective is split between managing entrenched continental border disputes and expanding its power in the IOR. India's peninsular location gives it a distinct advantage in projecting power throughout the IOR, and Indian leaders increasingly view the maritime domain as the most opportune avenue for India to achieve its great-power ambitions.¹⁵⁷ However, China's expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific threatens India's great-power ambitions in the IOR, and this expansion has led to a significant convergence of strategic interests between India and the United States; both are driven by a shared anxiety over China's expansion. Indian strategic planners view the United States and its allies as an important source of support for India's bid to achieve primacy within the IOR.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the United States, which sees the cultivation of Indian power in the IOR as an opportunity to reduce its presence in the region, has encouraged India's efforts to increase its presence throughout the region.

This chapter begins by examining India's security challenges and the evolution of Sino-Indian strategic competition, then outlines India's contemporary strategic objectives. Next, it examines Indo-U.S. relations, concluding with an overview of the role that Indian strategic planners view the Indo-U.S. defense partnership playing in supporting Indian national objectives. The purpose of this analysis is to illuminate India's unique strategic perspective, which differs substantially from that of the United States in a number of important ways, and heavily influences the Indian approach toward U.S.-India naval cooperation.

¹⁵⁷ Sunil Khilnani et al., *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign & Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 105.

¹⁵⁸ C. Raja Mohan, "India and the Balance of Power," *Foreign Affairs* 85, no. 4 (July 1, 2006): 17-32, <https://doi.org/10.2307/20032038>.

A. THE HISTORIC ORIGINS OF INDIA'S SECURITY CHALLENGES

India's interest in partnering with the United States occurs in the context of its rivalry with its continental neighbors, China and Pakistan. India's continental security problems began immediately following independence from Britain and the violent partition of the Indian subcontinent into two separate political entities. The Muslim-majority but Hindu-ruled princely state of Kashmir retained its independence after partition due to the indecision of its ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh. In an effort to force a favorable settlement of Kashmir's status, Pakistan began a military incursion into Kashmir using militant proxy forces immediately after India achieved independence in October 1947;¹⁵⁹ this operation was designed to secure Kashmir's accession to Pakistan while allowing Pakistani leaders to unify their fledgling state by establishing its identity as a guardian of the Muslim community.¹⁶⁰ The incursion of Pakistani militants into Kashmir forced Hari Singh to appeal to India for military assistance, ultimately resulting in his endorsement of Kashmir's accession to India. The rapid Indian intervention into Kashmir following the Maharaja's appeal triggered the First Kashmir War between India and Pakistan, which ended in a UN-sponsored cease-fire on 1 January 1949.¹⁶¹ Kashmir's status remains unresolved following the 1949 cease-fire, and the resulting tension has fueled a decades-long security competition between India and Pakistan. India has engaged in three major confrontations with Pakistan since the First Kashmir War, along with ongoing border skirmishes, and Pakistan remains a major Indian security concern.

Similarly, Sino-Indian strategic competition grew out of a dispute over the status of Tibet and the Himalayan border regions, which began in 1949.¹⁶² The first decade of Sino-Indian relations was characterized by disagreements over the status of Tibet and the legitimacy of the colonial-era McMahon line along the Himalayan border. China viewed

¹⁵⁹ S. Paul Kapur, "India's Wars," in *The Oxford Handbook of India's National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 96.

¹⁶⁰ Kapur, 96.

¹⁶¹ Kapur, 97.

¹⁶² John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2001), 3.

Tibet as an essential part of the Chinese state and saw Indian involvement in the territory as “interference in China’s internal affairs.”¹⁶³ China’s claim to Tibet is based on Tibet’s historic status as a tributary kingdom of Imperial China, when Tibet, along with many other Himalayan kingdoms, was “subordinate to the [Chinese] emperor.”¹⁶⁴ Modern Chinese nationalists argue that these states are parts of China that were stolen during its “century of humiliation,” and Tibet’s annexation by China in 1951 played into the Chinese narrative of recovering the holdings and prestige it lost during the 19th century.¹⁶⁵ Similarly, Indian Hindu nationalists also view Tibet, along with much of South Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Himalayas, as part of a historic *Greater India*.¹⁶⁶

These overlapping historic spheres of influence, touted by both Indian and Chinese nationalists, serve as one of the key underlying causes of Sino–Indian conflict.¹⁶⁷ Through the 1950s, China maintained that India’s colonial-era boundary known as the McMahon line was illegitimate.¹⁶⁸ However, China was willing to accept existing boundary lines as the *de facto* boundary provided that they were renegotiated prior to becoming *de jure* boundary.¹⁶⁹ The reason was that the McMahon line had been negotiated between the British colonial leadership and the Tibetan government. For China to accept this boundary as the *de jure* boundary would be to “concede that Tibet had then been sovereign.”¹⁷⁰ India under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, adopted a hardline stance in favor of the existing McMahon boundary line seeking to maximize the area of disputed territory under its control and argued that redrawing the boundary line was not open for renegotiation.¹⁷¹ In

¹⁶³ Garver, 32.

¹⁶⁴ Garver, 14.

¹⁶⁵ Garver, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Jayashree Vivekanandan, “Indianisation or Indigenisation? Greater India and the Politics of Cultural Diffusionism,” *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 56, no. 1 (January 2, 2018): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2018.1411232>.

¹⁶⁷ Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, 14.

¹⁶⁸ Neville Maxwell, “China and India: The Un-Negotiated Dispute,” *The China Quarterly* 43 (September 1970): 54.

¹⁶⁹ Maxwell, 54.

¹⁷⁰ Maxwell, 54.

¹⁷¹ Maxwell, 59.

1962, the Indian government combined this policy stance with an aggressive military buildup in disputed territories known as the *Forward Policy*,¹⁷² which threatened one of China's few supply routes into its Tibetan territories through the Aksai Chin plateau.¹⁷³

Frequent border skirmishes erupted between Indian and Chinese forces over the disputed border regions throughout the month of September and October 1962, culminating in China's *punitive expedition*, launched by China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) on 20 October 1962 to unseat Indian forces deployed along the disputed border regions.¹⁷⁴ Despite having their forces routed during China's initial assault, Indian leadership remained firm in their refusal to settle the border dispute through negotiation. India's resistance to negotiation prompted China to proceed with the second phase of its operation, which saw the PLA push deep into Indian territory from 15 to 19 November, 1962, before unilaterally withdrawing to positions occupying the disputed areas.¹⁷⁵ While the PLA succeeded in achieving its immediate military objectives in 1962, this short war failed to resolve the underlying Sino-Indian territorial grievances and brought China to the fore as India's principal existential security threat in the minds of Indian strategic planners.¹⁷⁶ Although India and China have not engaged in a military confrontation since the 1962 Sino-Indian war, their relations in the half-century since have been characterized by a persistent continental security dilemma. Both countries see their respective efforts to strengthen their defensive positions along the Himalayan border as threatening, spurring regular diplomatic and military altercations.

Additionally, in the years following the Sino-Indian war China forged an intimate strategic partnership with India's principal South Asian rival, Pakistan, known as the Sino-

¹⁷² Teresita C. Schaffer and Howard B. Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 26, muse.jhu.edu/book/45356.

¹⁷³ Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, 83.

¹⁷⁴ Maxwell, "China and India: The Un-Negotiated Dispute," 75.

¹⁷⁵ Kapur, "India's Wars," 99.

¹⁷⁶ Huma Sattar, "China and Pakistan's All-Weather Friendship," The Heritage Foundation, May 16, 2015, <https://www.heritage.org/asia/commentary/china-and-pakistans-all-weather-friendship>.

Pakistani *entente cordiale*.¹⁷⁷ This partnership exacerbates India's already tense security situation and forces Indian strategic planners to contend with the possibility of a two-front war.¹⁷⁸ China's support to Pakistan serves to prevent India from concentrating its resources and energy against China, and it also frustrates India's efforts to serve as a leading power in South Asia by embroiling India in politically costly cross-border disputes.¹⁷⁹ Pakistan refers to China as its "*all-weather friend*" and increasingly relies on Chinese defense support to meet its economic and defense needs.¹⁸⁰ Pakistan also regularly welcomes Chinese naval vessels for port calls, and Pakistani officials have expressed a desire for China "to construct a naval base near the country's southwestern port city of Gwadar [which] was built in the past decade with Chinese assistance."¹⁸¹

The Sino-Pakistani strategic partnership, thus, presents India with a multi-faceted security challenge that seems to have no easy solution. China's support for Pakistan constrains India's response to Pakistani provocations, while Pakistan's strategically valuable location has the potential to provide China with a base of operations in the heart of India's sphere of influence and alongside critically important Middle Eastern energy supply routes. Pakistan serves as a valuable tool in supporting China's foreign policy objectives vis-à-vis India, and the relationship is likely to continue as long as Pakistan continues to further China's South Asian objectives.

B. CHINA'S EXPANSION INTO THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

The historical origins of India's security challenges shape its perception of China's expansion into the IOR, which Indian leaders perceive as an extension of the continental Sino-Indian security dilemma into the maritime domain. China's extraordinary economic growth in recent decades drives the expansion of its trade network across the Indo-Pacific

¹⁷⁷ Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, 217.

¹⁷⁸ Sattar, "China and Pakistan's All-Weather Friendship."

¹⁷⁹ Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century*, 189.

¹⁸⁰ Farhan Bokhari, *Pakistan Opens Arms to "all Weather" Friend* (IHS Jane's, 2011), <https://janes-ihs-com.libproxy.nps.edu/Janes/Display/jdw46217-jdw-2011>.

¹⁸¹ Bokhari.

region to markets throughout the developed and developing world. At the center of China's expanding trade network lies the Indian Ocean Region. The IOR serves as a critical transport route for Chinese goods travelling to European, African, and Middle Eastern Markets, as well as a significant transport route for Chinese energy imports.

However, the economic potential of the IOR remains hampered by an infrastructure gap that the World Bank estimates will require the investment of "between \$1.7 trillion and \$2.5 trillion" to close. In answer to this gap, China's increasing economic engagement with the IOR was formalized in late 2013, when Chinese President Xi Jinping formally announced the *One Belt One Road* (OBOR) project, now referred to as the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI). Although Chinese trade and investment throughout the Indo-Pacific was already significant prior to 2013, the formal announcement of the BRI was accompanied by a pronounced increase in Chinese investment. The BRI's purpose is twofold: first, it serves as a means to develop new markets for Chinese goods and services by linking the Chinese economy to Europe, Africa, and the Indo-Pacific through massive infrastructure and transportation projects; second, and more controversially, the BRI is an opportunity for China to "increase its regional influence and play a larger leadership role" on the international stage.¹⁸² Many of the largest BRI projects are concentrated in the IOR, an aspect of the BRI known as the *Maritime Silk Road*.¹⁸³ The Indian Ocean serves as the Southern terminus of the BRI's China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and as a central transport route for Chinese sea trade.

Although the flow of Chinese infrastructure spending into the IOR was initially lauded by many of the region's developing states such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives,¹⁸⁴ these states and others have since struggled to pay back massive Chinese loans taken out

¹⁸² Darshana M. Baruah, "India's Answer to the Belt and Road: A Road Map for South Asia," August 21, 2018, 7, <https://carnegieindia.org/2018/08/21/india-s-answer-to-belt-and-road-road-map-for-south-asia-pub-77071>.

¹⁸³ Baruah, 5.

¹⁸⁴ Jean-Marc F. Blanchard and Colin Flint, "The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative," *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (April 18, 2017): 228, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1291503>.

to finance infrastructure development projects of questionable economic viability.¹⁸⁵ The growing levels of indebtedness to China throughout the IOR has raised doubts over Chinese intentions, and led to accusations by critics of the BRI project that the Chinese government is intentionally “creating economic dependencies, which are then exploited for strategic purposes,” a mercenary practice coined *Debt Trap Diplomacy* by Chinese foreign policy hawks.¹⁸⁶ Often touted as the principal example of this practice is Sri Lanka’s BRI-financed Hambantota port project, which saw the heavily indebted Sri Lankan government give control of the strategically advantageous port facility to a Chinese state-owned company as part of a debt-relief package negotiated with its creditor, China.¹⁸⁷

Whether China is intentionally saddling regional states with debt as part of a larger strategic bid to control critical infrastructure is debatable; however, it is unmistakable that BRI investments give China significant leverage over recipient nations. This influence is viewed with concern by India, which views China’s BRI as a major threat to its perceived sphere of influence within the IOR. Darshana M. Baruah observes that “until China’s BRI emerged, New Delhi did not sense a threat to its bilateral relationships with its neighbors, as India’s relationships with other leading infrastructure funders in South Asia, such as Japan, are not characterized by such a prevailing sense of competition.”¹⁸⁸

Official Chinese statements regarding the BRI remain unified in their messaging that the project is solely designed to “increase global integration and boost growth,” but many of the Chinese development projects carried out under the Belt and Road banner also serve China’s strategic needs.¹⁸⁹ Indian strategic planners increasingly view China’s commercial projects “as a means to advance its strategic ambitions in ways that often are

¹⁸⁵ Jonathan Hillman, “Game of Loans: How China Bought Hambantota” (Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2, 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/game-loans-how-china-bought-hambantota>.

¹⁸⁶ Hillman.

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Hillman, *Game of Loans: How China Bought Hambantota* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/game-loans-how-china-bought-hambantota>.

¹⁸⁸ Baruah, “India’s Answer to the Belt and Road,” 6.

¹⁸⁹ Matthew Funaiole and Jonathan Hillman, “China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Economic Drivers and Challenges,” in *China’s Maritime Silk Road: Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2018).

not conducive to India's interests."¹⁹⁰ One of the most salient examples is the shortening of China's energy supply lines and the elimination of the "Malacca Dilemma," China's strategically vulnerable dependence on the Strait of Malacca. China seeks to accomplish this through the construction of oil pipelines and transport corridors from Western China to the newly constructed deepwater ports in Myanmar and Pakistan.¹⁹¹

In 2016, over 60% of China's crude-oil imports were sourced from Middle Eastern and African countries, and a majority of these imports traversed Indian Ocean shipping lanes through multiple maritime chokepoints before reaching the Chinese market.¹⁹² Additionally, the deepwater ports constructed under the auspices of the Belt and Road project also serve as strategically valuable points of resupply for Chinese naval forces, a fact that is not lost on China's global competitors but one that is denied by official Chinese sources.¹⁹³ Many of these deepwater ports now regularly receive Chinese warships, with the presence of PLA(N) submarines at Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Karachi, Pakistan¹⁹⁴ raising alarm within Indian strategic circles due to the dubious Chinese rationale for deploying a strategic weapon to the Indian Ocean in support of counter-piracy efforts.¹⁹⁵

China's rapid economic growth and expanding commercial interests throughout the Indo-Pacific are accompanied by a commensurate increase in the size and scope of its security sphere. In the IOR, China's growing presence is driven by "the perceived vulnerability of its sea lines of communication across the Indian Ocean to harassment and

¹⁹⁰ Darshana M. Baruah, "India's Answer to the Belt and Road: A Road Map for South Asia," August 21, 2018, 2, <https://carnegieindia.org/2018/08/21/india-s-answer-to-belt-and-road-road-map-for-south-asia-pub-77071>.

¹⁹¹ Funairole and Hillman, "China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Economic Drivers and Challenges," 23.

¹⁹² "How Is China's Energy Footprint Changing?," Center for Strategic and International Studies, *ChinaPower Project* (blog), February 15, 2016, <https://chinapower.csis.org/energy-footprint/>.

¹⁹³ Leah Dreyfuss and Mara Karlin, *All That Xi Wants: China Attempts to Ace Bases Overseas* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2019), 4, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/all-that-xi-wants-china-attempts-to-ace-bases-overseas/>.

¹⁹⁴ Koh Swee Lean Collin, "China-India Rivalry At Sea: Capability, Trends, and Challenges," in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma At Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York: Routledge, 2019), 42–43.

¹⁹⁵ P.K. Ghosh, "Chinese Nuclear Subs in the Indian Ocean," *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/04/chinese-nuclear-subs-in-the-indian-ocean/>.

interference from Somali pirates and other criminals and their vulnerability to pressure from the U.S. and/or India in the event of crisis or conflict.”¹⁹⁶ Chinese leaders have responded to this perceived vulnerability by focusing on the development of a modern blue-water navy capable of protecting its interests abroad.¹⁹⁷ China’s State Council Information Office (SCIO) published a defense white paper in 2015 that outlined the increased role for the PLA(N) which stated that the PLA(N) “now has a newfound mission— namely, to ‘safeguard the security of China’s overseas interests.’”¹⁹⁸ China’s military presence is a response to growing “public expectations for the Chinese government to protect [its] people and fortunes overseas.”¹⁹⁹ December of 2008 marked the first deployment of the People’s Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) to the Indian Ocean in support multinational counter-piracy efforts, and the PLAN has maintained a continuous naval presence in the IOR ever since. Additionally, despite years spent denying any intention to establish overseas military bases,²⁰⁰ China inaugurated its first overseas military base in Djibouti in August of 2017.²⁰¹

The growth of Chinese investment and the subsequent securitization of its supply lines and interests in the IOR has triggered an expansion of the traditionally continental Sino–Indian security dilemma into the maritime domain.²⁰² While China may have a legitimate desire to protect its significant interests in the IOR, “the perception that China is a hostile expansionist power remains firmly entrenched in the Indian

¹⁹⁶ Geoffrey Till, “Naval Development and International Stability in the Indian Ocean Region,” in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma At Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York: Routledge, 2019).

¹⁹⁷ Collin, “‘New Normal’ in the Indo Pacific: Sino-Indian Maritime Security Dilemma,” 148.

¹⁹⁸ Collin, “China-India Rivalry At Sea: Capability, Trends, and Challenges.”

¹⁹⁹ Andrew Scobell and Nathan Beauchamp-Mustafaga, “The Flag Lags But Follows: The PLA and China’s Great Leap Outward,” in *Chairman Xi Remakes the PLA: Assessing Chinese Military Reforms* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2019), 178.

²⁰⁰ Christopher D. Yung, “Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements for the Twenty-First Century,” *China Maritime Studies Institute* 13 (2015): 47–62.

²⁰¹ Xinhua, “China Sets up Base in Djibouti—Xinhua | English.News.Cn,” Xinhua News, July 11, 2017, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-07/11/c_136435716.htm.

²⁰² Collin, “‘New Normal’ in the Indo Pacific: Sino-Indian Maritime Security Dilemma.”

mindset.”²⁰³ China’s growing military presence is responsible for stoking Indian fears that China’s growing regional ties and strategically located dual-use development projects represent a *String of Pearls* designed to strategically encircle India,²⁰⁴ and visits by PLA(N) attack submarines to port facilities in Karachi, Pakistan²⁰⁵ and Colombo, Sri Lanka²⁰⁶ appear to support this theory. Indian leaders perceive the growing Chinese presence in the IOR as a zero-sum game, with each Chinese economic, diplomatic, and military advancement in the region constituting a blow to Indian power.

Moving forward, Sino–Indian competition in the IOR is likely to increase, as Chinese inroads threaten India’s bid to achieve regional primacy and Sino–Indian “contestation [becomes] more widespread and intensive.”²⁰⁷ China is building capacity to respond to natural disasters and provide humanitarian aid in the IOR²⁰⁸ and is also using anti-piracy patrols as a means to normalize the presence of PLAN surface combatants in the Indian Ocean. The establishment of China’s first overseas military base in Djibouti increased its capacity to operate in the region, and all signs point toward additional Chinese bases being established in the future.²⁰⁹ China’s presence also allows smaller Indian Ocean nations to extract concessions from India by threatening to build closer ties with China, as

²⁰³ Yogesh Joshi and Anit Mukherjee, “The Security Dilemma and India’s Naval Strategy,” in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma At Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York: Routledge, 2019).

²⁰⁴ Jayanna Krupakar, “China’s Naval Base(s) in the Indian Ocean—Signs of a Maritime Grand Strategy?,” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 3 (May 4, 2017): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1296622>.

²⁰⁵ Abhijit Singh, “Deciphering China’s Submarine Deployments in the Indian Ocean Region | Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses,” Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, July 8, 2015, https://idsa.in/idsacomments/DecipheringChinasSubmarineDeploymentsintheIndianOceanRegion_asingh_080715.

²⁰⁶ James Brown, “Chinese Subs Lurk Under the Indian Ocean: Cause for Concern?,” Text, The National Interest, September 29, 2014, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/chinese-subs-lurk-under-the-indian-ocean-cause-concern-11367>.

²⁰⁷ Mohan, *Samudra Manthan—Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, 189.

²⁰⁸ Mark Wild, “The New Face of Humanitarian Aid and Intervention: China and Its Growing Role in the Realm of African Development,” *Perceptions* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 93–107.

²⁰⁹ David Brewster, “China’s New Network of Indian Ocean Bases,” The Lowy Institute, January 30, 2018, <https://www.loyyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/chinas-new-network-indian-ocean-bases>.

the Philippines has successfully done between the United States and China.²¹⁰ While China may never succeed in entirely supplanting India as the region's preferred security partner and HA/DR provider, it continues to present itself as an attractive alternative to India, forcing India to compete for power and influence in its strategic backyard.²¹¹

In this way, the Chinese presence constrains India's efforts to grow its regional influence, while dramatically increasing the cost. China will likely paint its activities as part of a benevolent and beneficial effort to share the burden of regional security with India, but allowing China's presence to become normalized throughout the region constitutes a loss in the eyes of India's leaders, who chafe at the idea of tolerating a permanent Chinese military presence. The discordant Chinese and Indian regional objectives are responsible for the emergence of a Sino-Indian security dilemma in South Asia, where Chinese actions taken to expand its engagement with the IOR are interpreted as aggressive by Indian leadership, and Indian actions are similarly perceived as threatening by China.

C. INDIA'S CONVENTIONAL STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

It is within this context of growing Sino-Indian contestation that India's strategic focus is gradually shifting toward the IOR. India's opaque national security apparatus and its lack of publicly available strategic policy documents stand in stark contrast to the United States' practice of routinely revising and publishing strategic policy guidance at multiple levels. For this reason, any assessment of India's strategic priorities must be inferred rather than drawn from official government documents as was the case in the previous chapter. Current literature and the statements of prominent Indian leaders point to two overarching strategic priorities pursued by the Indian military: India seeks to maintain sufficient nuclear and conventional power along its land borders to deter or respond to Chinese and Pakistani provocations, while expanding its maritime capabilities and achieving a state of primacy throughout the IOR. Although the possibility of a two-front war along its continental

²¹⁰ Max Fisher, "Rodrigo Duterte Plays U.S. and China Off Each Other, in Echo of Cold War," *The New York Times*, November 3, 2016, sec. World, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/04/world/asia/philippines-duterte-us-china-cold-war.html>.

²¹¹ Vivek Mishra, "China Is Moving into the Indian Ocean," *The National Interest*, April 14, 2018, <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/china-moving-the-indian-ocean-25380>.

borders remains, the entrenched nature of India's continental disputes affords little opportunity for India to expand its national power.

The persistent strategic gridlock that exists along India's continental borders stands in sharp contrast to the incipient and tractable power dynamic of the Indian Ocean, which presents an opportunity for India to achieve its great-power ambitions unencumbered by traditional continental barriers to success. The dynamism of the IOR is driving a gradual shift in Indian strategic thought, away from its continental focus and toward the maritime domain. This shift is supported by strategic thinkers at India's Center for Policy Research²¹² who write, "the fundamental design that must underpin the shaping of India's military power should be the leveraging of potential opportunities that flow from peninsular India's location in the Indian Ocean ... the development of military power must therefore attain a significant maritime orientation."²¹³

Within the IOR India aims to achieve a state of primacy, which entails becoming the primary guarantor of regional stability, the security partner of choice for nations bordering the Indian Ocean, and the leading provider of regional humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The driving force behind this objective is India's desire to exercise control over the sea lines of communication that cross the Indian Ocean, upon which its economy and security depends.²¹⁴ As Arnab Dasgupta observes, It is "naturally imperative for India to strategize and securitize its energy-supplying routes across the Indian Ocean, not only for the upkeep of its own national interests, but also for the sake of a greater regional responsibility."²¹⁵ Currently, the Indian Ocean's security challenges are mitigated by the presence of the United States and its allies; however, this situation may change in the future as budget cuts and security challenges elsewhere draw U.S. and allied resources

²¹² Jagannath Panda, *Revisiting India's Policy Priorities: Nonalignment 2.0 and the Asian Matrix* (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research (NBR), 2012), <https://www.nbr.org/publication/revisiting-indias-policy-priorities-nonalignment-2-0-and-the-asian-matrix/.pamda>

²¹³ Khilnani et al., *Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign & Strategic Policy for India in the 21st Century*, 105.

²¹⁴ Arnab Dasgupta, "India's Strategy in the Indian Ocean Region: A Critical Aspect of India's Energy Security," *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 22, no. 1 (2018): 39–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0973598418757817>.

²¹⁵ Dasgupta.

away from the Indian Ocean. As U.S. involvement wanes, India must move to fill the gap or risk ceding responsibility for maritime security throughout the region to China, which is also in the process of expanding its footprint throughout the region.

India therefore plans to increase its power in the IOR through a multifaceted approach that includes strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties with neighboring states, taking a leading role in conducting maritime security operations and HA/DR,²¹⁶ improving its conventional naval capabilities, and establishing close ties with other Indo-Pacific naval powers.²¹⁷ Building closer ties with its Indian Ocean neighbors is a critical component of India's bid to attain primacy within the IOR, and this focus has given rise to the Modi government's "Neighborhood First" policy, which involves the commitment of additional resources and energy toward cultivating regional partnerships.²¹⁸

The Indian Navy has consequently taken an outsized role in supporting this initiative due to the wide range of capabilities it provides, ranging from hosting multinational exercises to conducting humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations (HA/DR). India's third "Annual Joint Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HA/DR) Exercise,"²¹⁹ held in August of 2019, is one such example; the exercise included the participation of observers from Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Seychelles, Australia, Kenya, Singapore, Somalia, Nepal, and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat.²²⁰ The Indian Navy's biannual MILAN exercise also attracts a similarly large pool of international participants and serves as a valuable forum for the Indian Navy to

²¹⁶ Lalit Kapur, "An Indian Ocean Agenda for Modi 2.0," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, June 3, 2019, <https://amti.csis.org/an-indian-ocean-agenda-for-modi-2-0/>.

²¹⁷ Manjeet S. Pardesi, "India's Conventional Military Strategy," in *The Oxford Handbook of India's National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 125.

²¹⁸ K. Yhome, "'Neighbourhood First' Policy in the Changing Regional Geopolitics," *Observer Research Foundation* (blog), September 26, 2019, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/neighbourhood-first-policy-in-the-changing-regional-geopolitics-55887/>.

²¹⁹ Roby Thomas, "Indian Navy's Annual HADR Exercise: A Collaborative Humanitarian Response in IOR | Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses," Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, August 9, 2019, <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/Indian-navy-annual-hadr-exercise-roby-thomas>.

²²⁰ Thomas.

strengthen its ties with regional states.²²¹ The participation of countries along the Indian Ocean's rim in India-led multilateral defense exercises strengthens the Indian Navy's ability to respond to future disasters and emergent security challenges, while supporting its claim to be a benevolent guarantor of regional security and stability.

In addition to expanding the scale and frequency of its bilateral and multilateral defense exercises, India has also increased its support for regional institutions such as the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).²²² These institutions provide critical opportunities for India to engage with nations throughout the region and reiterate its commitment to regional security and economic growth. India's involvement in regional institutions is also a core component in its efforts to promote an "integrated [South Asian] neighborhood, which could pave the way for the formation of a comprehensive regional economic and security partnership."²²³ Although the purpose of these institutions is not explicitly military, the issues they address require a significant degree of military involvement and coordination. Thus, engagement with regional institutions offers India the opportunity to build personal relationships between naval leaders, share techniques and best practices, and build its capacity to respond to security threats throughout the region, all of which support India's bid to control the IOR while resisting Chinese expansion.²²⁴

Operationally, India has burnished its reputation as a guarantor of regional stability through its continuous participation in multinational anti-piracy patrols off the Horn of Africa (HoA) since 2008 and its commitment to providing HA/DR to nations throughout the Indian Ocean.²²⁵ Most recently India's HA/DR capability was demonstrated by its

²²¹ David Scott, "The 'Indo-Pacific'—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence," *Asia-Pacific Review* 19, no. 2 (November 1, 2012): 85–109, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13439006.2012.738115>.

²²² Mehta, "The Indo-Pacific Imperative," 7.

²²³ Mehta, 7.

²²⁴ P.K. Ghosh, "Indian Ocean Naval Symposium: Uniting the Maritime Indian Ocean Region," *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 3 (May 1, 2012): 352–57, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2012.670482>.

²²⁵ David Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean?," *Security Challenges* 6, no. 3 (2010): 1–20.

rapid response to provide aid to Mozambique in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai in March of 2019, when three Indian Navy vessels were “the first to arrive on the scene and [commence] humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) and search and rescue (SAR) operations.”²²⁶ Although India enjoys an advantage in responding to natural disasters due to its central location in the Indian Ocean, in the future, it is likely to experience increased competition for HA/DR operations as China builds the capacity to respond to natural disasters far from its shores. Nevertheless, HA/DR operations and maritime security patrols continue to provide India with a valuable medium for reinforcing its bid to serve as the region’s leading power.

A third critical component of India’s strategy to control the IOR is the replacement of its ageing military equipment, a large portion of which has been in service since the Cold War. India has consistently been the world’s leading importer of arms since 2010, spending over \$30 billion on modern weapons systems in this time period.²²⁷ In recent years, India has improved its maritime capabilities through the acquisition of modern P-8I maritime patrol aircraft from the United States, along with a Project-971I Akula nuclear attack submarine and modern MiG-29K carrier aircraft from Russia.²²⁸ Although Indian arms purchases from Russia threatened to trigger mandatory U.S. sanctions under the United States *Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* (CAATSA), India has since been granted a waiver that allows it to purchase advanced Russian weapons systems without U.S. reprisal.²²⁹ Additionally, the United States has elevated India to “Strategic Trade Authorization-1 (STA-1) status, putting it in the same tier as the United States’

²²⁶ Shishir Upadhyaya, “Cyclone Idai and India’s Role as a New Security Provider,” *The Diplomat*, March 26, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/cyclone-idai-and-indias-role-as-a-new-security-provider/>.

²²⁷ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Trend Indicator Values of Arms Imports to the Top 5 Largest Importers, 2010–2018* (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019), http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/html/export_toplist.php.

²²⁸ Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *Transfers of Major Weapons: Deals with Deliveries or Orders Made for 2012 to 2018 between Russia, the United States, and India* (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2019), http://armstrade.sipri.org/armstrade/page/trade_register.php.

²²⁹ Trushaa Castelino, *U.S. Elevates India’s Defense Trade Status* (Washington, DC: The Arms Control Association, 2019), <https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2018-09/news-briefs/us-elevates-india%E2%80%99s-defense-trade-status>.

NATO allies,” allowing for the future sales of cutting-edge Western military technology to India that will dramatically bolster its capacity to project power throughout the Indian Ocean region.²³⁰ These moves by the United States to enable Indian access to U.S. defense exports signal America’s support for India’s defense modernization efforts.

India is also implementing much-needed structural reforms throughout its defense institutions alongside its efforts to acquire advanced weapons systems.²³¹ At present, India’s few joint military commands are “institutionally weak in relation to the individual services,”²³² and its acquisition system has been historically constrained by inefficient state-owned enterprises and the lethargic-yet-powerful Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).²³³ The Modi administration has taken measures to improve joint operability through the creation of a Chief of Defense Staff (CDS) in August of 2019, which, when filled, will be the first time a senior military officer has been empowered to act as head of all three of India’s armed services.²³⁴ Additionally, private-sector bidding for defense contracts combined with increased governmental oversight of DRDO projects that exceed development timelines is likely to improve India’s capability to equip its force with advanced domestically produced systems in the future.²³⁵ Moving forward, India will likely improve its capability to monitor and deter Chinese expansion into its maritime security sphere by continuing to purchase sophisticated foreign weapons systems and pursue institutional reform.²³⁶

²³⁰ Castelino.

²³¹ Shashank Joshi, “Indian Military Modernization,” in *The Oxford Handbook of India’s National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 389–416.joshi

²³² Joshi, 403.

²³³ Richard A. Bitzinger, “India’s Defence Industrial Base,” in *The Oxford Handbook of India’s National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 146.

²³⁴ Kartik Bommakanti and Harsh V. Pant, “Modi Reimagines the Indian Military,” *Foreign Policy* (blog), September 6, 2019, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/09/06/modi-reimagines-the-indian-military/>.

²³⁵ Bitzinger, “India’s Defence Industrial Base,” 146.

²³⁶ Brewster, “The Expansion of India’s Security Sphere,” 504.

D. INDO–U.S. RELATIONS FROM THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Indian leaders envision a key role for the United States in achieving its host of strategic objectives in the IOR. The United States serves not only as a valuable source of foreign military hardware and technology but also as a willing partner in India's efforts to expand its engagement with the IOR and restrain Chinese expansion. That said It would be negligent to embark upon a discussion of India's present relationship with the United States without first discussing India's unique perspective on the major impediments to cooperation that plagued the Indo–U.S. relationship in the past. This period of estrangement centered on India's identity as a non-aligned state with nuclear aspirations, which alarmed U.S. leaders who viewed the world through a binary Cold-War lens, and led the United States to adopt foreign policy positions hostile to India's national interests.

Indian nonalignment has its roots in early 20th-century assessments made by the pre-independence leaders of the Indian National Congress, who “took the view that ... the biggest security risk [to India] was being drawn into the conflict of other nations.”²³⁷ This perspective emerged as the foundation of India's foreign policy approach following India's independence in 1947, and was championed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Indian leaders envisioned nonalignment as a “uniquely Indian”²³⁸ concept designed to guarantee India's strategic autonomy in the post–World War Two world order while “minimizing external threats from other countries by not aggravating political or economic differences.”²³⁹ India's commitment to non-alignment precluded its involvement in the U.S.-led Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which its chief rival Pakistan eagerly joined in 1954, securing U.S. military hardware and financial support in the process.²⁴⁰ The binary Cold War perspective

²³⁷ Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, “India's ‘Non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World,” *International Affairs* 91, no. 4 (July 2015): 748.

²³⁸ Schaffer and Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy*, 17.

²³⁹ Pant and Super, “India's ‘Non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World,” 748.

²⁴⁰ Schaffer and Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy*, 21.

maintained by U.S. leaders was incompatible with Nehru's unwillingness to enter into formal military alliances, and this led the United States to view Pakistan as a bulwark against the spread of Communism in South Asia and its security-partner of choice in the region. The United States' decision to arm Pakistan as part of its Cold-War containment strategy was viewed with disdain by Nehru, who commented that "a military pact between Pakistan and the U.S. changes the whole balance in this part of the world ... [and] this arming of Pakistan is largely against India, or might be used against India."²⁴¹

Indo-U.S. relations, strained as they were by U.S. support for Pakistan, were overshadowed by the unexpected and disastrous Sino-Indian war of 1962.²⁴² The United States briefly won India's favor by providing much-needed support to India during the conflict, but this positive momentum was short-lived. Based upon a fundamental misreading of the South Asian state of affairs, U.S. President John F. Kennedy attempted to use the immediate aftermath of the Sino-Indian war to push for "reconciliation between India and Pakistan ... [reckoning] that with both India and Pakistan dependent on the United States for military and economic assistance, such an initiative would have a good chance of winning acceptance."²⁴³ The unwelcome U.S. push for Indo-Pakistani rapprochement had the unintended consequence of discouraging Indian policymakers from pursuing closer ties with the United States, due to their recognition that accepting U.S. aid invited U.S. intervention in Indian affairs. Indo-U.S. relations would further deteriorate as a result of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, during which Pakistan utilized significant quantities of U.S.-provided war materiel against Indian forces.²⁴⁴ Despite the conflict occurring as a result of Pakistani provocations,²⁴⁵ the United States responded by

²⁴¹ Schaffer and Schaffer, 21.

²⁴² Schaffer and Schaffer, 26.

²⁴³ Schaffer and Schaffer, 29.

²⁴⁴ Pant and Super, "India's 'Non-Alignment' Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World," 753.

²⁴⁵ Kapur, "India's Wars," 101.

“[cutting] off military and economic assistance to both India and Pakistan, a move Indians bitterly resented.”²⁴⁶

India’s disinclination to formally align itself with the United States turned to outright disdain during the early 1970s, when the United States increased its support for Pakistan and pursued rapprochement with the People’s Republic of China.²⁴⁷ Fear of a U.S.-backed Sino–Pakistani concord spurred Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to pursue closer relations with the Soviet Union in a radical departure from India’s nonaligned status. The so-called “Peace and Friendship Pact” with the Soviet Union “created deterrence against any form of a US–China–Pakistan detente and rendered India increasingly dependent on the Soviet Union for its defence capabilities.”²⁴⁸ The loosely worded treaty allowed Indian politicians to argue that India had not deviated from its path of nonalignment,²⁴⁹ while securing it an external ally sufficiently powerful as to deter U.S. or Chinese direct military intervention into East Pakistan later that year during the Bangladesh War of 1971. India’s intervention in East Pakistan also drove an enraged President Nixon to order a U.S. Carrier Strike Group to the Indian Ocean in a show of support for Pakistan,²⁵⁰ a move that darkened India’s perception of the United States, and resulted in a “pro-Soviet tilt in India’s foreign policy” that would persist until the collapse of the Soviet Union.²⁵¹

India’s perception of the United States was also profoundly affected by U.S. opposition to its nuclear weapons program, which Indian leaders saw as an important

²⁴⁶ Schaffer and Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy*, 32.

²⁴⁷ Pant and Super, “India’s ‘Non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World,” 753.

²⁴⁸ Pant and Super, “India’s ‘Non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World,” 753.

²⁴⁹ Pant and Super, “India’s ‘Non-Alignment’ Conundrum: A Twentieth-century Policy in a Changing World,” 753.

²⁵⁰ Raghavendra Mishra, “Revisiting the 1971 ‘USS Enterprise Incident’: Rhetoric, Reality, and Pointers for the Contemporary Era,” *Journal of Defence Studies* 9, no. 2 (June 2015): 49–80.

²⁵¹ Schaffer and Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy*, 35.

means to “minimize the risk of catastrophic defeat by China [and] insulate India from the dangers of growing Pakistani nuclear and missile capabilities.”²⁵² Aside from their legitimate national security concerns, Indian leaders also perceived developing nuclear weapons as being a key element in achieving India’s great-power ambitions. Nuclear weapons were seen by Indian leaders as a status symbol held exclusively by the world’s most powerful nations, and India saw itself as a rightful member of that elite group. India’s efforts culminated in the detonation of its first nuclear device in 1974, which drove the United States to adopt “legislation such as the 1978 Nuclear Non-- proliferation Act, the Pressler Amendment, and the Symington Amendment ... designed specifically to prevent India or Pakistan from acquiring nuclear weapons.”²⁵³ The United States’ effort to enforce nonproliferation in South Asia was deeply insulting to Indian leaders, with Indian Senior Advisor on Defense and Foreign Affairs Jaswant Singh referring to the United States’ nonproliferation regime as a “nuclear apartheid ... in which existing nuclear powers enjoyed the strategic and political benefits that came with possession of nuclear weapons, while relegating the rest of the world to second--class status.”²⁵⁴ The damage done by U.S. efforts to constrain India’s nuclear ambitions would not be redressed until the Bush administration’s negotiation of the U.S.–India Civil Nuclear Agreement between 2005 and 2008,²⁵⁵ which represented an “American commitment to assisting India [to] ...take its place in the community of nations as a true great power.”²⁵⁶

In sum, India’s relationship with the United States was hampered for decades by U.S. attempts to dictate terms to a fiercely independent India. U.S. leaders remained oblivious to the nuances of India’s policy of nonalignment, and repeatedly succumbed to a misguided Cold War–era binary worldview that saw weapons and aid freely flowing to Pakistan, much to the chagrin of India. Current efforts to improve Indo–U.S. relations have

²⁵² S. Paul Kapur, “The Indian Nuclear Program: Motivations, Effects, and Future Trajectories,” in *Nuclear Proliferation and International Order: Challenges to the Non-Proliferation Treaty* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 16, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.4324/9780203844823>.

²⁵³ Kapur, 17.

²⁵⁴ Kapur, 16–17.

²⁵⁵ Perkovich, “Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal,” 20.

²⁵⁶ Kapur, “The Indian Nuclear Program: Motivations, Effects, and Future Trajectories,” 17.

been successful not simply due to the convergence of strategic interests between the two nations but due to a growing understanding among U.S. policymakers and diplomats of India's desire to be treated as an equal on the world stage.

E. THE UNITED STATES' ROLE IN INDIA'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY

In the eyes of India's leaders, defense ties with the United States serve Indian strategic interests in three major ways. First, the United States supports Indian primacy in the IOR and regularly attends Indian defense exercises and training events, which legitimizes India's presence in the region and improves its capability to serve as the region's net security provider. Second, working closely with the United States broadens India's access to U.S. defense exports and technology, easing ongoing deficiencies in India's defense modernization and development efforts. Lastly, and most importantly for India's strategic interests, close ties with the United States serves as a balance against China's rising power in the Indo-Pacific region, and allows for greater economy of effort for U.S. and Indian forces working to check Chinese ambitions.

India enjoys U.S. support for its bid to achieve primacy in the IOR due to the U.S. desire to offload the burden of supporting regional stability and combating transnational security threats to India. In the past, Indian and U.S. units have interacted to address regional security issues, however their efforts "have been characterized more as mutual deconfliction as opposed to coordination."²⁵⁷ However, this is slowly changing as the United States and India work to establish a closer relationship in the IOR. Beginning in 2018, the United States and India agreed to "formal, regular interactions between the Indian Navy and the U.S. Central Command's naval component in Bahrain" in support of ongoing counterpiracy operations in the Gulf of Aden.²⁵⁸ This represents a significant step away from mere deconfliction, and toward a more unified Indo-U.S. regional security effort. In addition to closer coordination to tackle non-state threats to regional security, the U.S. is

²⁵⁷ Andrew C. Winner, "The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans," in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma at Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 172.

²⁵⁸ Winner, 172.

also eager to seek “burden-sharing opportunities with India” in the realm of humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR).²⁵⁹ India’s growing role as the region’s preeminent security provider was most recently displayed in March, 2019 in the aftermath of Cyclone Idai, where the Indian Navy provided services historically rendered by the United States.²⁶⁰ As India steps into an expanded role as a guarantor of stability in the IOR, it will benefit from “U.S. capacity to advance Indian interests in multilateral forums,” which serves a crucial role in securing regional acceptance of India’s new and expanding role in the IOR.²⁶¹

In addition to the benefits that come from U.S. endorsement of India’s increasing regional presence, closer defense relations with the United States also increase India’s access to the U.S. defense industry, from which it might acquire much-needed weapons systems and technology. Already the United States has “extended help to India to build its defence capabilities,”²⁶² evidenced by the sale of modern U.S. Boeing P-8I maritime patrol aircraft to India and the United States’ decision “to release the critical Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System for the Indian Navy’s future aircraft carrier.”²⁶³ India’s access to U.S. technology and military hardware is set to increase as additional milestones are reached, such as the landmark Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreement (CISMOA), which was signed in 2018 and paves the way for India to receive sensitive U.S. communications technology.²⁶⁴ Acquiring U.S. technology and hardware bolsters India’s capabilities across the full spectrum of military operations, from disaster

²⁵⁹ Nilanthi Samaranyake, Catherine Lea, and Dmitry Gorenburg, *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean* (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analyses, 2014), 6.

²⁶⁰ Upadhyaya, “Cyclone Idai and India’s Role as a New Security Provider.”

²⁶¹ Rajesh Rajagopalan, *India’s Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia* (New Delhi, India: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2017), 30, <https://carnegieindia.org/2017/09/14/india-s-strategic-choices-china-and-balance-of-power-in-asia-pub-73108>.

²⁶² Pardesi, “India’s Conventional Military Strategy,” 125.

²⁶³ Mishra, “India–US Defence Cooperation: Assessing Strategic Imperatives,” 8.

²⁶⁴ Ankit Panda, “What the Recently Concluded US-India COMCASA Means,” *The Diplomat*, September 9, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/what-the-recently-concluded-us-india-comcasa-means/>.

relief efforts to high-tech warfare, and as such it plays a vital role in furthering Indian strategic objectives.

Finally, enhancing U.S.–India ties furthers India’s China strategy, not only through U.S. technology transfers (internal balancing)²⁶⁵ and support for India’s presence in the IOR, but by serving as an external balance against Chinese power.²⁶⁶ India’s ambitions in the IOR dovetail with U.S. strategic interests in the broader Indo-Pacific region because an increased Indian presence in the IOR reduces the operational burden placed on U.S. forces, “thereby allowing America to focus on the Chinese challenge in East Asian waters.”²⁶⁷ Freeing U.S. resources for tasking elsewhere in the Indo-Pacific is a net positive for India’s interests, because an increasing concentration of U.S. forces in East and Southeast Asia will tie down a greater percentage of China’s available naval forces, reducing the resources available to support its expansion into the IOR. The implications of this partnership are not lost on Chinese leaders, and India’s increasing closeness with the United States sends a powerful political signal to Beijing that its efforts to encroach upon India’s traditional sphere of influence will not be taken lightly.²⁶⁸

In sum, India’s contemporary security outlook is profoundly shaped by its history of conflict with Pakistan and China along its continental borders. The extant Sino–Indian security dilemma is expanding into the IOR as China’s growing power enables it to expand its reach into India’s traditional security sphere. India is responding to this new power dynamic by shifting its strategic focus toward the IOR and focusing on increasing its regional engagement, promoting force modernization and reform efforts, and forging closer defense partnerships with Indo-Pacific powers. Despite the turbulent past relationship between the U.S. and India, China’s activities in the IOR have led to a confluence of the two states’ interests, and the United States now occupies a central role in India’s design to achieve its regional strategic objectives.

²⁶⁵ Tanvi Madan, “The U.S.-India Relationship and China,” *Brookings* (blog), September 23, 2014, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-u-s-india-relationship-and-china/>.

²⁶⁶ Rajagopalan, *India’s Strategic Choices: China and the Balance of Power in Asia*.

²⁶⁷ Pardesi, “India’s Conventional Military Strategy,” 125.

²⁶⁸ Pardesi, 125.

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IV. NAVAL COOPERATION IN THE U.S.–INDIA DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP

As the previous two chapters have established, the United States and India maintain discrete but complementary strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. U.S. and Indian interests dovetail in their shared concern about China’s aggressive rise, a concern that is driving the two nations toward a closer defense relationship. U.S. and Indian efforts to expand their defense collaboration have thus far focused on naval cooperation, an area of military-to-military engagement that seems to offer both nations the opportunity to effectively deepen their strategic ties while simultaneously serving their respective strategic interests. This chapter systematically examines the benefits of furthering U.S.–India naval cooperation by first exploring some of the broad advantages naval cooperation brings to the U.S.–India defense partnership and then identifying the specific ways in which naval cooperation serves both U.S. and Indian strategic interests. The chapter concludes by explaining how U.S.–India naval cooperation constrains China’s expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific. This in-depth look at the merits and utility of U.S.–India naval cooperation illuminates why the United States should further naval cooperation with India.

A. NAVAL POWER IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

Understanding the utility of naval cooperation in the U.S.–India defense partnership begins with recognizing the centrality of the maritime environment to the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific stretches from the east coast of Africa to the western shores of the United States, encompassing a majority of the world’s population and a substantial percentage of global economic output.²⁶⁹ Together, the Indian and Pacific Oceans dominate the region, comprising two-thirds of the Earth’s seaspace and approximately 47% of the Earth’s total surface area²⁷⁰ and providing the economic lifeblood of the region

²⁶⁹ Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2011), 6–7.

²⁷⁰ B. W. Eakins and G. F. Sharman, “Volumes of the World’s Oceans from ETOPO1” (Boulder, CO: National Ocean and Atmospheric Administration—National Geophysical Data Center, 2010), https://ngdc.noaa.gov/mgg/global/etopo1_ocean_volumes.html.

through abundant resources and sea lines of communication. The Indo-Pacific is home to the preponderance of the world's island nations, which are bound to the sea by their very geography, but even those nations situated along the periphery of the Eurasian landmass are prevented from relying upon land-based lines of communication by the continent's vast and inhospitable hinterland. For this reason, transoceanic shipping serves as a critical means of transport and commerce throughout the region, providing energy imports for the Indo-Pacific's hydrocarbon-poor states while also linking the region's economies to overseas markets. The Indo-Pacific's waterways continue to grow in importance as the global balance of wealth and economic output shifts toward the Indo-Pacific.²⁷¹

Given the centrality of the maritime environment to the Indo-Pacific region, it naturally follows that the major Indo-Pacific economic powers would also increase their naval power as a means of protecting the seaborne trade and maritime resources upon which their livelihood depends. The cultivation of a strong naval force as a necessary component of protecting maritime commerce has a strong historical precedent. The writings of Alfred Thayer Mahan impressed upon 19th-century powers the importance of cultivating seapower and maintaining the capability to defend the waterways upon which a nation's wealth depended from enemy fleets.²⁷² A strong navy was seen by Mahan as "necessary to a commercial power, [as both] a promoter and conservator of commerce."²⁷³ Although the Mahanian preoccupation with securing control of the sea through major fleet engagements may appear antiquated in the context of a globalized international system, seapower still serves an indispensable function in the current era by providing for, as Geoffrey Till notes, "the common defence of all legitimate forms of the use of the sea."²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy*, November 2011, 57.

²⁷² Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660–1783*, 12th ed. (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Company, 1918), 25–26.

²⁷³ Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 3rd ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History (New York: Routledge, 2013), 19.

²⁷⁴ Till, 36.

The utility of seapower in defense of the maritime commons from both state and nonstate threats is identified by Till as a *postmodern*²⁷⁵ conceptualization of the role of naval power in a globalized world. This is in contrast to the *modern* “paradigm of naval behavior ... [which is focused] on the defence of the country and its immediate interests, rather than the defence of ‘the system.’”²⁷⁶ Whether Indo-Pacific nations are motivated by a modern or postmodern conception of naval power, the fact remains that the region’s meteoric economic growth is driving the subsequent expansion of the maritime security interests of regional nations.²⁷⁷ These nations seek to “exert military power at sea in order to acquire or enlarge their share of the sea’s resources, or protect it against threats from others.”²⁷⁸ Thus, naval diplomacy, defined by Till as “maritime activity on a spectrum ... which ranges from limited compellent military attack at one extreme, through deterrence to thoroughly amicable cooperation at the other,” represents the most constructive avenue for regional engagement both now and in the future.²⁷⁹

B. ADVANTAGES OF NAVAL COOPERATION TO THE U.S.–INDIA DEFENSE PARTNERSHIP

Naval cooperation represents the most collaborative action available to states along the spectrum of naval diplomacy, and as such, it is a natural medium for enhancing U.S.–Indian relations. Naval cooperation’s benefits to the U.S.–India defense relationship can be placed into two broad categories: namely, aspects of naval cooperation that are advantageous to the broader U.S.–India strategic relationship and benefits that specifically further the strategic objectives of the U.S. and India in the Indo-Pacific region. Aspects of naval cooperation that make it a useful tool for advancing the overall U.S.–India strategic

²⁷⁵ Till, 35–36.

²⁷⁶ Till, 32.

²⁷⁷ Kun-Chin Lin and Andres Villar Gertner, *Maritime Security in the Asia-Pacific: China and the Emerging Order in the East and South China Seas* (London: Chatham House: The Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2015), 7.

²⁷⁸ Hedley Bull, “Sea Power and Political Influence,” *The Adelphi Papers* 16, no. 122 (1976): 3, <https://doi.org/10.1080/05679327608457271>.

²⁷⁹ Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*, 247.

partnership are the neutrality of international waters, the mobility and endurance of naval forces, and the multi-mission capabilities of modern naval vessels.

First among the broader benefits of naval cooperation is the internationally recognized 12 nautical mile territorial water boundary established by the UNCLOS.²⁸⁰ This boundary allows nations engaged in naval cooperation to interact in a politically neutral space outside of the limit of a state's territorial waters. The neutrality of international waters affords states a degree of flexibility in how they characterize a naval cooperation event to their domestic population, either emphasizing its importance or downplaying the interaction as a chance encounter in international space. Naval forces interacting in international waters also require no prior diplomatic approval, nor does naval cooperation involve the housing of foreign military forces within a nation's borders. Together, these benefits provided by the neutrality of international waters allow naval cooperation to avoid inflaming domestic sensitivities by remaining away from the view of the general public and giving politicians a significant degree of control over the narrative surrounding maritime activities.²⁸¹

In the U.S.–India context, conducting maritime cooperation events in international waters provides a distinct advantage to U.S. and Indian leaders seeking to enhance bilateral defense ties while remaining sensitive to domestic Indian concerns over foreign military engagements. Remaining cognizant of India's domestic perceptions is important due to India's strong institutional preference for nonalignment, as well as the continued presence of segments of Indian society that vehemently oppose advancing relations with the U.S., such as the communist movements in Kerala and West Bengal.²⁸² The most vocal proponent of maintaining India's policy of nonalignment is India's Congress Party (CP), which retains significant influence within the Indian government and among left and

²⁸⁰ The United Nations Secretariat, "United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea" (1982), pts. II, section 2, article 3, <https://legal.un.org/avl/ha/unclos/unclos.html>.

²⁸¹ Winner, "The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans," 170.

²⁸² Ian Hall, "India's National Security: A Liberal Account," in *The Oxford Handbook of India's National Security*, 1st ed. (New Delhi, India, 2018), 46.

center-left political parties.²⁸³ Strengthening the U.S.–India strategic relationship through naval cooperation allows the two countries to engage in a distant international space that “is less visible and therefore less controversial for Indian policymakers ... unlike army or air force exercises, which may require U.S. forces and assets to deploy onto Indian Soil.”²⁸⁴ The maritime approach thus avoids antagonizing sectors of Indian society that maintain a deeply ingrained aversion to explicit foreign military commitments and is a more politically acceptable route for Indian leaders to further cooperation with the United States.

The second benefit of naval cooperation is the inherent mobility and endurance of naval platforms.²⁸⁵ Over the years, different theorists have described this trait in different ways, with Hedley Bull using the terms *flexibility, visibility, and universality*,²⁸⁶ while Ken Booth has produced a list of “seven basic assets” of naval platforms, which includes the aforementioned *mobility* and *endurance*.²⁸⁷ At their core, these theorists describe the unique ability of modern blue-water naval vessels to transit into distant theaters carrying their own supplies and military hardware and to remain present and available for tasking for extended periods of time. Bull observes that “the seas, by contrast with the land and the air, are an international medium [that] allows naval vessels to reach distant countries independently of nearby bases and ... makes a state possessed of sea power the neighbor of every other country that is accessible by sea.”²⁸⁸ Although the specific amount of time that a warship is able to remain at sea differs substantially depending on the class of ship and its stores, the ability to deploy and operate independently of external support offers a level of flexibility that is unique to the naval service. Air and ground forces are typically

²⁸³ Perkovich, “Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal,” 20.

²⁸⁴ S. Amer Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady As They Go* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), 30, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-india-military-engagement>.

²⁸⁵ Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1977), 34–35, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.4324/9781315769646>.

²⁸⁶ Bull, “Sea Power and Political Influence,” 6.

²⁸⁷ Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, 33.

²⁸⁸ Bull, “Sea Power and Political Influence,” 6.

more specialized in the roles they perform and require a greater degree of planning and coordination to be successfully brought into theater.²⁸⁹

The mobility and endurance of naval platforms affords U.S. and Indian naval planners an operational flexibility that is unmatched by other warfare domains. The United States in particular maintains a regular naval presence throughout the world, and the months-long deployment cycle of U.S. warships allows for a significant degree of variability in a warship's schedule and transit routes. U.S. units transiting through the Indian Ocean en route to the Persian Gulf can easily be rerouted to facilitate ad-hoc naval cooperation events with Indian Navy vessels, a practice that already occurs regularly.²⁹⁰ For larger exercises, vessels can be quickly concentrated to increase the size or importance of a training evolution or dispersed throughout the theater and called in when needed to suit the needs of a particular event.²⁹¹ The endurance of naval platforms also allows for exercises to vary significantly in their locations, evidenced by India's MALABAR naval exercises, which have varied in location from the Bay of Bengal to Japan's East Coast and waters surrounding the U.S. territory of Guam.²⁹²

The third benefit of naval cooperation is provided by the multi-mission capabilities of modern warships. Many of the same traits that enable naval platforms to operate effectively in wartime also allow them to "perform a range of tasks of a social, humanitarian or political character."²⁹³ Some examples include their wide range of maritime sensors that facilitate search and rescue operations and maritime security operations, their onboard medical capabilities and carriage of essential supplies, and their

²⁸⁹ Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, 34.

²⁹⁰ Morgan K. Nall, "Theodore Roosevelt Strike Group, Indian Navy Sail Together," Official Government website, United States Pacific Fleet, March 27, 2018, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/140140>.

²⁹¹ Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, 35.

²⁹² Adarsha Verma, "The Malabar Exercises: An Appraisal," Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis, July 18, 2017, https://idsa.in/idsacomments/the-malabar-exercises_averma_180717.

²⁹³ Ken Booth, *Navies and Foreign Policy*, 1st ed. (London: Routledge, 1977), 33, <https://doi-org.libproxy.nps.edu/10.4324/9781315769646>.

ability to communicate and operate in remote locations.²⁹⁴ The multinational anti-piracy patrols maintained off the Horn of Africa since 2008,²⁹⁵ as well as the rapid multinational naval response to provide HA/DR to the Philippines after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013,²⁹⁶ are both clear examples of the flexibility of modern naval platforms and their utility in roles that are not explicitly military. The multi-mission nature of naval platforms thus offers policymakers “strategic flexibility in the pursuit of foreign policy objectives.”²⁹⁷

With regards to the United States and India, planning maritime cooperation events centered on non-military objectives allows the U.S. and Indian Navies to enhance their interoperability within a benign non-military framework. This characteristic is particularly important for India, which harbors an influential cadre of policymakers sensitive to the “over-militarization” of its engagements with foreign powers.²⁹⁸ Naval scholar Andrew C. Winner notes that holding naval cooperation events with a “somewhat fuzzy public mandate and scope is prudent ... [because] if the U.S. and India were to exercise combined sea denial operations or strike operations ... elements of the Indian body politic may question whether this is an activity that jeopardizes India’s strategic autonomy.”²⁹⁹ Naval operations in support of non-military objectives still enable the U.S. and India to exercise the logistics capacity required to maintain blue-water naval operations, improve their proficiency in ship handling and navigation, and enhance their ability to operate together and with allied and partner nations. In this way, while the skills and relationships developed during the exercise undoubtedly serve to better capabilities during a military confrontation, exercises and operations between the U.S. and India can be organized around a humanitarian or maritime security framework.

²⁹⁴ Koh Swee Lean Collin, “ASEAN Perspectives on Naval Cooperation With India: Singapore and Vietnam,” *India Review* 12, no. 3 (August 12, 2013): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2013.821326>.

²⁹⁵ Sarah Percy, “Counter-Piracy in the Indian Ocean: A New Form of Military Cooperation,” *Journal of Global Security Studies* 1, no. 4 (2016): 277, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jogss/ogw018>.

²⁹⁶ Alexander Nicoll and Jessica Delaney, eds., “Asian Disaster Relief: Lessons of Haiyan,” *Strategic Comments* 20, no. 2 (February 2014): ii–iv, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13567888.2014.899739>.

²⁹⁷ Koh Swee Lean Collin, “ASEAN Perspectives on Naval Cooperation With India: Singapore and Vietnam,” *India Review* 12, no. 3 (August 12, 2013): 186, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2013.821326>.

²⁹⁸ Hoyt, “India in the U.S. Naval Strategy,” 134.

²⁹⁹ Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” 172.

C. NAVAL COOPERATION'S CONTRIBUTION TO U.S. AND INDIAN STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Within the context of U.S. and Indian strategic objectives in the IOR, naval cooperation advances India's strategic objectives by improving the capability and capacity of the Indian Navy and encouraging greater defense acquisitions and joint development of technology with the United States. Similarly, U.S.–India naval cooperation supports U.S. strategic objectives by incorporating India more closely into its network of regional security partners, facilitating greater U.S.–India naval burden sharing, and supporting the maintenance of a favorable balance of power for the United States in the Indo-Pacific region.

First, U.S.–India naval cooperation increases India's naval capability and capacity by expanding opportunities for the Indian Navy and the U.S. Navy to conduct bilateral exercises and operations that will allow Indian Navy personnel to observe and adopt advanced tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) employed by the U.S. and its allies. Building human capital through exposure to advanced TTPs will improve the Indian Navy's ability to operate the platforms it already has and provides Indian sailors and officers with an opportunity to work closely with next-generation systems employed by the United States. Exposure to advanced TTPs is already occurring during the annual India-led MALABAR series of naval exercises between the U.S. and Indian navies, where the tactical complexity of the exercise “appears to be increasing incrementally each year.”³⁰⁰ Building the Indian Navy's human capital through enhanced training is an essential part of the Indian Navy's bid to “develop a robust naval architecture capability that would allow India to design and maintain its own ships [and systems].”³⁰¹ Additionally, increasing the frequency of U.S. and Indian combined operations builds personal relationships and familiarity that enables U.S. and Indian units to operate more effectively together.

Second, strengthening bilateral ties between the U.S. and India through naval cooperation also increases the likelihood that India will turn to the United States to meet

³⁰⁰ Winner, 171.

³⁰¹ Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady As They Go*, 17.

its mounting defense acquisitions needs.³⁰² The burgeoning defense relationship between the U.S. and India recently resulted in the signing of two Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DDTI) agreements at the second annual U.S.–India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue in late 2019.³⁰³ The signing of these agreements added to the already significant progress made in 2018, where the United States elevated India to “Tier 1 of the Department of Commerce’s Strategic Trade Authorization license exception,” giving it access to the same advanced U.S. technology as its NATO allies.³⁰⁴ In 2018 the U.S. and India also signed the COMCASA agreement, which paved the way for the U.S. to transfer “secure communications and data equipment to India.”³⁰⁵ Increased naval cooperation will further expose India’s naval leaders to next-generation U.S. platforms and technology, helping them to identify systems and capabilities for future bilateral development or acquisition and speeding up India’s naval modernization efforts.³⁰⁶ It will also provide additional opportunities for U.S. and Indian companies to develop and test new technologies under real-world conditions. The use of naval cooperation events to test emerging technologies was demonstrated during the U.S. led Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise in 2018, during which Japan successfully tested its Mitsubishi Type 12 surface-to-ship missile.³⁰⁷ Increasing the frequency and complexity of U.S.–India naval cooperation events presents new opportunities for U.S. and Indian defense companies to collaborate to meet India’s naval defense acquisitions and development needs, both now and in the future.

³⁰² Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” 172–73.

³⁰³ “U.S. and India Deepen Bilateral Defense Trade, Sign Two Defense Technology and Trade Initiative Agreements,” U.S. Department of Defense, December 19, 2019, <https://www.defense.gov/Newsroom/Releases/Release/Article/2044183/us-and-india-deepen-bilateral-defense-trade-sign-two-defense-technology-and-tra/>.

³⁰⁴ “U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross Announces Programs to Increase U.S. Commercial Engagement in the Indo-Pacific Region,” U.S. Department of Commerce, July 30, 2018, <https://www.commerce.gov/news/press-releases/2018/07/us-secretary-commerce-wilbur-ross-announces-programs-increase-us>.

³⁰⁵ Jeff Smith, “COMCASA: Another Step Forward for the United States and India,” *The Diplomat*, September 11, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/comcasa-another-step-forward-for-the-united-states-and-india/>.

³⁰⁶ Verma, “The Malabar Exercises: An Appraisal.”

³⁰⁷ David Larter, “The U.S. Navy’s New Anti-Ship Missile Scores a Hit at RIMPAC, but There’s a Twist,” *Defense News*, August 2, 2018, <https://www.defensenews.com/naval/2018/07/20/the-us-navys-new-anti-ship-missile-scores-a-hit-at-rimpac-but-theres-a-twist/>.

Together, the growth in the quantity and quality of U.S.–India naval exercises, combined with additional Indian acquisitions of U.S. defense technology and participation in joint development projects, significantly improves India’s ability to achieve its strategic objectives in the IOR. Enhanced training and modernized naval platforms will equip Indian naval forces to more effectively maintain an Indian presence throughout the IOR and counter non-state threats to maritime security. Increasing the Indian Navy’s presence and capacity also strengthens India’s ability to conduct HA/DR operations by reducing Indian response times and improving the quality of services rendered. Additionally, improvements in Indian maritime security and HA/DR operations make India a more attractive security partner for smaller nations throughout the IOR, which are currently being courted by outside naval powers, specifically China.³⁰⁸ Lastly, increasing U.S.–Indian interoperability enhances India’s ability to operate in concert with other U.S. Indo-Pacific defense partners such as Japan, Singapore, and Australia, due to their substantial use of U.S. defense technology and platforms. In sum, enhanced naval cooperation between the U.S. and India markedly improves India’s ability to achieve its regional strategic objectives and advances India’s bid to achieve primacy in the IOR.

Forging strong U.S.–India naval ties and building a more capable and technologically advanced Indian Navy also serves U.S. strategic interests in three important ways. First, growing the U.S.–India strategic partnership supports the U.S. network of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific by promoting closer relations between India and key U.S. regional allies and by allowing the United States to make inroads with countries that enjoy favorable relations with India. This process is already underway, as recently demonstrated by Australia’s decision to invite an official Indian delegation to observe the biannual Talisman Sabre exercise in 2019³⁰⁹ and by Japan’s now substantial role in the annual India-led MALABAR naval exercise.³¹⁰ Enhancing U.S.–India naval cooperation empowers India to engage in more substantial ways with the full network of U.S. allies and

³⁰⁸ Mishra, “China Is Moving into the Indian Ocean.”

³⁰⁹ “Talisman Sabre 2019, Largest Ever Bilateral Defense Exercise in Australia Opens,” Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet, July 8, 2019, <https://www.cpf.navy.mil/news.aspx/110789>.

³¹⁰ Verma, “The Malabar Exercises: An Appraisal.”

partners in the region, contributing to the overall strength of the U.S. framework for upholding a rules-based international order.

U.S.–India naval cooperation also presents the United States with an opportunity to engage more closely with India’s defense partners. A principal example is Vietnam, which maintains a close bilateral defense partnership with India, while its relationship with the United States remains plagued by “historical issues and [differing] political ideologies.”³¹¹ India-led maritime exercises allow the United States to improve ties with nations like Vietnam within the context of a third-party defense exercise, circumventing domestic objections or impediments to engaging more closely with the U.S. Military. Altogether, U.S.–India naval cooperation strengthens the coalition of states committed to a free and open Indo-Pacific region and creates new opportunities for the U.S. to engage with nations throughout the region.

Second, strengthening the Indian Navy promotes greater burden-sharing between the U.S. and India by allowing the United States to offload the task of patrolling Indian Ocean waterways and littorals to India, which is eager to assume greater responsibility for supporting regional stability in the IOR.³¹² Currently, the United States Navy maintains a near-constant presence in the IOR, participating in counterpiracy operations off the Horn of Africa, escorting vessels through dangerous waters in the Red Sea, and fulfilling a wide variety of other missions in support of regional maritime stability. The U.S. Navy’s presence in the IOR saps resources from its operations in the western Pacific such as the U.S. Freedom of Navigation (FON) program,³¹³ which is designed to “demonstrate that countries cannot restrict navigational rights and freedoms around islands and reclaimed features contrary to international law as reflected in the [UNCLOS].”³¹⁴ The impact and

³¹¹ Anh Duc Ton, “Vietnam’s Maritime Security Challenges and Regional Defence and Security Cooperation,” *Soundings*, Soundings Papers—Sea Power Centre, Royal Australian Navy, no. 14 (March 2018): 23–26.

³¹² Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” 173.

³¹³ Scott, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence,” 98.

³¹⁴ Gregory Poling, “South China Sea FONOP 2.0: A Step in the Right Direction,” Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, February 2, 2016, <https://amti.csis.org/south-china-sea-fonop-2-0-a-step-in-the-right-direction/>.

effectiveness of the FON program is directly tied to the U.S. Navy's ability to contest "the entire spectrum of excessive claims being made by China and other claimants in the South China Sea,"³¹⁵ but its current force disposition is "rapidly becoming inadequate" to support these critical operations.³¹⁶ Increased burden sharing with India allows the Indian Navy to provide "a stabilising, flanking presence west of the Malacca Straits, ensuring the safety of sea-lanes of communications while American naval strength is concentrated [in the western Pacific]." ³¹⁷

Third, U.S.–India naval cooperation supports the United States' desire to maintain a favorable balance of power in the Indo Pacific region by increasing the combined combat power of the U.S. and Indian Navies. Although the United States enjoyed undisputed primacy across the global commons throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, the increasing strength of revisionist powers inimical to a rules-based international order now challenges U.S. hegemony.³¹⁸ In 2015, the United States began a modest naval expansion program in response to the growing naval strength of its adversaries, but the significant lead time and costs associated with constructing and delivering additional naval platforms means that this approach alone is unlikely to arrest the relative decline of U.S. naval combat power in the near term.³¹⁹ For the United States to address the "negative shift in the regional balance of power," it needs to more effectively integrate and coordinate its naval operations with allies and partners throughout the Indo-Pacific.³²⁰ Advancing naval cooperation with India forms a central facet of the broader U.S. effort to bolster its relative strength in the Indo-Pacific. By improving the Indian Navy's capability to engage in high-end naval conflict, while simultaneously integrating Indian forces more closely into the

³¹⁵ Poling.

³¹⁶ Winner, "The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans," 175.

³¹⁷ Scott, "The 'Indo-Pacific'—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence," 100.

³¹⁸ Avinandan Choudhury and P. Moorthy, "Strategic-Maritime Triangle in the Indian Ocean: An Emerging Indo-US Naval Entente?," *India Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2018): 314, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928418785477>.

³¹⁹ Cancian, *U.S. Military Forces in FY 2020*, 5.

³²⁰ Patrick Shanahan, "The Department of Defense Indo-Pacific Strategy Report" (U.S. Department of Defense, June 1, 2019), 16.

U.S. regional security framework. The force-multiplying effect provided by increased U.S.–India naval cooperation enhances Washington’s ability to deter malign regional actors and offsets current deficiencies in U.S. naval platforms and manpower.³²¹

D. CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS OF U.S.–INDIA NAVAL COOPERATION ON CHINESE EXPANSION

U.S.–India naval cooperation has broad implications for China’s expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific region due to their strong desire to limit the growth of Chinese power.³²² U.S. and Indian leaders remain cautious to avoid characterizing Indo–U.S. naval cooperation as explicitly aimed at China, but by cementing the U.S.–India defense relationship and realizing their respective strategic objectives, it also furthers their desire to inhibit Chinese ambition. David Scott explains that “the explicit stated aspect of [U.S.–India maritime cooperation is] the threat from piracy and jihadist destabilization of sea-routes, but the implicit unstated aspect [is] ... constraining China’s blue water naval expansion in the western Pacific and Indian Ocean.”³²³ India is highly unlikely to formally join a “US-led anti-China coalition or China-containment strategy,”³²⁴ but the aggregate increase in U.S. and Indian naval power through naval cooperation impacts the strategic calculus of Chinese naval planners. While the exact degree to which U.S.–Indian naval cooperation constrains Chinese expansion is difficult to measure, the enhanced naval strength and capabilities produced by the defense partnership are inimical to China’s revisionist ambitions in the Indo-Pacific.³²⁵

Within the IOR, an improved Indian Navy enables India to more effectively contest China’s efforts to expand its power and influence in the region. Upgraded conventional capabilities in areas such as intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR), anti-submarine warfare (ASW), and anti-surface warfare (ASuW) allow the Indian Navy to

³²¹ Holmes, “The U.S.-India Naval Cooperation: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” 143–47.

³²² Mishra, “India–US Defence Cooperation: Assessing Strategic Imperatives,” 11.

³²³ Scott, “The ‘Indo-Pacific’—New Regional Formulations and New Maritime Frameworks for US-India Strategic Convergence,” 100.

³²⁴ Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” 162.

³²⁵ Glaser, “China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order,” 4.

maintain greater situational awareness of Chinese forces operating in the IOR while increasing the deterrent effect of Indian warships.³²⁶ Similarly, enhanced HA/DR and maritime security capabilities give the Indian Navy added credibility as a guarantor of regional stability and security partner of choice in the IOR, reducing the appeal of China's overtures toward smaller Indian Ocean states. China's PLA(N) will encounter more technologically advanced and capable Indian military hardware, and China's efforts to increase its regional influence through naval diplomacy will compete against an invigorated and increasingly effective Indian presence. Ultimately, the growth in Indian naval capacity will dramatically increase the costs and risk of Chinese operations in the IOR.

Similarly, Increasing the U.S. Navy's presence in the western Pacific through U.S.–India naval cooperation allows the United States to more effectively contest China's maritime claims that are contrary to international law and obstruct its bid to dominate the seaspace inside the First and Second Island Chains.³²⁷ A greater U.S. presence also adds credence to the United States' stated commitment to defending a rules-based international order where that order appears to be challenged by China's revisionist ambitions.³²⁸ The net effect of a surging U.S. presence in the western Pacific will be to reassure key U.S. allies in East and Southeast Asia, while increasing the military and diplomatic pressure placed on China. A larger U.S. presence will decrease the likelihood that East and Southeast Asian nations will feel compelled to yield to China's demands, and it will push China to conform to existing international norms.

³²⁶ Mishra, "India–US Defence Cooperation: Assessing Strategic Imperatives," 8.

³²⁷ Stacy Pedrozo, "China's Active Defense Strategy and Its Regional Impact," § U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission (2011), 1–2, <https://www.cfr.org/report/chinas-active-defense-strategy-and-its-regional-impact>.

³²⁸ Glaser, "China as a Selective Revisionist Power in the International Order," 5–6.

V. CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

A. RESEARCH SUMMARY

The central question this thesis has sought to answer is the following: why should the United States advance naval cooperation with India? Answering this question first required gaining an understanding of the role of naval cooperation in the U.S.–India strategic partnership by thoroughly analyzing their respective geopolitical circumstances. Accordingly, the research here began by surveying the wide expanse of literature studying the Indo-Pacific region, India’s unique domestic strategic culture, and China’s role in the emerging regional power dynamics. This overview provided the background necessary to support an in-depth exercise in comparative perspectives, which analyzed the strategic outlook of both the United States and India and illuminated how both countries view each other and the strategic environment of the Indo-Pacific and China. These sections made it clear that, while India and the United States are still somewhat hampered in furthering their relationship by their distinct institutional and historical backgrounds, the two nations are nonetheless experiencing an unprecedented confluence of strategic interests, which is driving their expanding defense partnership.

Myriad factors influence both U.S. and Indian decision-making, such as their unique strategic objectives and threat perceptions. The research in Chapter IV finds that naval cooperation presents an accessible, impactful, and politically advantageous avenue for the two nations to further their defense partnership and advance their respective national interests. In particular, U.S.–India naval cooperation represents an effective means for the United States and India to achieve their respective and shared strategic objectives in the Indo-Pacific region. Naval cooperation affords India an attractive and politically advantageous means for engaging with the United States to increase its naval capacity and capabilities, which will dramatically expand India’s ability to operate throughout the IOR. Correspondingly, the growth of Indian naval power allows the U.S. Navy to offload the burden of maintaining a rules-based international order in the IOR and divert additional resources to the western Pacific, favorably altering the Indo-Pacific balance of power and supporting U.S. FON operations in the South China Sea. The combined expansion of U.S.

and Indian naval power will likely restrain Chinese ambitions throughout the Indo-Pacific by increasing the diplomatic and military cost of its activities. The benefits of naval cooperation in the U.S.–India context are not discrete or independent of one another. Rather, naval cooperation’s positive effects combine to form an interconnected web of complementary outcomes that further a wide variety of U.S. and Indian interests, while addressing a range of strategic needs and concerns. The extensive benefits naval cooperation provides to U.S. and Indian strategic objectives explains why the United States should pursue naval cooperation with India.

By determining why the United States should advance naval cooperation with India this research equips U.S. leaders in the present and future with an understanding of the utility of naval cooperation in furthering the U.S.–India defense partnership. Particularly with regards to the U.S. Department of Defense, this research provides U.S. military leaders with a comprehensive primer on the U.S.–India defense partnership and the importance of the maritime approach in the Indo-Pacific geopolitical context.

B. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS AND AREAS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on the findings of this thesis, naval cooperation serves a wider variety of U.S. and Indian interests than other forms of defense cooperation while exacting fewer political and monetary costs. However, while naval cooperation provides many unique benefits to the U.S.–India defense partnership, the continuing growth of the partnership will likely feature engagement across all warfare domains by all branches of the armed forces that are not examined here. Each branch offers unique attributes that are applicable and advantageous in certain settings. Determining what role other branches may play in defense cooperation for advancing the U.S.–India defense partnership would require a comparative study of the respective advantages and disadvantages of using the U.S. Army, the U.S. Navy, or the U.S. Air Force. A comparison of this scale was outside the scope of this thesis, and is an important area for further study.

The research here also found that providing U.S. defense exports to India is generally beneficial to U.S. interests, but it made no attempt to identify which technologies would be the most beneficial in Indian hands. In the future, U.S. leaders can benefit from

further research to identify the U.S. defense technology and equipment that, if acquired and operated by India, would provide the greatest possible benefit to U.S. strategic objectives. This research would help the United States prioritize its offerings to the Indian Ministry of Defense and would arm U.S. leaders with the knowledge to offer additional concessions or more favorable terms on U.S. systems that are most likely to provide second-order benefits to U.S. strategic objectives. While Indian acquisitions of U.S. systems are positive overall, the United States could do more to ensure that the systems and technologies offered to India provide the greatest possible strategic return to the United States.

C. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

U.S.–Indian relations under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump appear to be thriving.³²⁹ In many ways, their relationship is evidence that the current U.S. approach is bearing fruit and should be maintained, albeit with minor alterations. In light of the current success, there are a number of actions that the United States might take that could positively affect the already burgeoning U.S.–India defense partnership, and there are also a multitude of actions that U.S. leaders must avoid and details that they must remain aware of if the current positive trajectory of the relationship is to be maintained.

In furthering U.S.–India naval cooperation and the larger U.S.–India strategic partnership, the United States Navy and the U.S. Department of Defense should seek to increase personnel exchange opportunities with India. Such an initiative might include actions such as inviting India to establish permanent liaison officers at major U.S. fleet concentrations or U.S. Unified Combatant Commands (UCC).³³⁰ Establishing a permanent Indian presence at major U.S. headquarters would help streamline U.S.–India

³²⁹ Nilanthi Samaranayake, Michael Connell, and Satu Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations* (Arlington, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 2017), 28, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2016-U-013938-Final2.pdf.

³³⁰ S. Amer Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady As They Go* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2012), 46–47, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-india-military-engagement>.

naval cooperation activities and would hopefully elicit a response in kind to welcome U.S. liaison officers into the Indian Navy or the Indian Ministry of Defence. Additionally, the United States should make funds available for Indian officers to attend the Naval Postgraduate School and other such institutions, which helps familiarize promising mid-grade Indian officers with U.S. military culture and build interpersonal relationships with their counterparts in the U.S. military.³³¹ Informally, this initiative might involve encouraging further engagement between U.S. and Indian think tanks and educational institutions, inviting Indian strategic thinkers to more actively engage with U.S. academics and contribute to the increasingly energetic academic discourse on the U.S.–India defense partnership.

Additionally, the United States should move to “resurrect dormant exercises such as HABU NAG, INDIAEX, SALVEX and SPITTING COBRA.”³³² These prior U.S.–India naval cooperation exercises covered a wide variety of maritime objectives and warfare areas, but have not been conducted in recent years. Their revival would allow the United States and India to increase the frequency of their naval cooperation efforts while minimizing the domestic political costs incurred by Indian politicians. Reviving prior exercises allows Indian politicians to minimize domestic political backlash from members of the Indian body politic by inhabiting an extant framework for U.S.–India naval cooperation. Similarly, expanding naval cooperation prevents international opponents of the expanding U.S.–India defense partnership from claiming that the U.S. and India are devising new methods or frameworks for cooperation. Using this approach, the United States and India will be able to claim that the exercises are merely the continuation of an existing mechanism for cooperation.

As far as avenues of engagement are concerned, the United States Navy and the U.S. Department of Defense should avoid concentrating pro-Indian engagement efforts and

³³¹ Richard Rahul Verma and Samir Saran, *Strategic Convergence: The United States and India as Major Defence Partners* (New Delhi, India: Observer Research Foundation, 2019), 9, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/strategic-convergence-the-united-states-and-india-as-major-defence-partners-52364/>.

³³² Samaranayake, Connell, and Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations*, 32.

personnel with Indian expertise solely within the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) AOR.³³³ India itself and much of the IOR falls within USINDOPACOM's domain. However, United States Central Command retains responsibility for a significant portion of the IOR and regularly engages with India on a wide variety of regional maritime security and humanitarian concerns.³³⁴ Given that U.S. leaders often view the U.S.–India defense partnership within the context of the broader U.S.–China security competition in the Indo-Pacific region, there is a real possibility that the preponderance of U.S. resources and effort designed to enhance the U.S.–India defense partnership will flow to USINDOPACOM. U.S. leaders should ensure that the United States continues to engage with India through multiple Combatant Commands, and should be mindful of allowing U.S.–India naval cooperation to become too heavily focused on the efforts of USINDOPACOM.

The research here also revealed a number of Indian idiosyncrasies that, if overlooked or mismanaged by U.S. leaders, could result in mutual consternation or Indian backlash. First, India remains fiercely protective of its strategic autonomy, and its leaders remain averse to formal alliances or military commitments due to its preference for nonalignment and colonial history. This presents a unique problem for U.S. leaders accustomed to interacting with formal U.S. allies, and will require them to adapt to accommodate India's unique outlook.³³⁵ India's disinclination toward formal military commitments is partially responsible for the sluggish pace of U.S.–India security cooperation negotiations, because the standard raft of bilateral security cooperation agreements that precede increased U.S. engagement “have largely been designed for treaty allies.”³³⁶ The language and content of even the most basic agreements or joint statements must often be adapted to suit India's need to maintain its strategic autonomy. Similarly,

³³³ “USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility,” United States Indo-Pacific Command, accessed February 23, 2020, <https://www.pacom.mil/About-USINDOPACOM/USPACOM-Area-of-Responsibility/>.

³³⁴ Samaranayake, Connell, and Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations*, 35.

³³⁵ Andrew C. Winner, “The U.S. Response: Naval Architecture and Plans,” in *India-China Maritime Competition: The Security Dilemma at Sea*, 1st ed., Cass Series: Naval Policy and History 63 (New York, NY: Routledge, 2019), 168.

³³⁶ Winner, 168.

India is wary of engaging in activities that might imply formal alignment, such as joint FONOPs with the United States against excessive or illegal Chinese maritime claims in the South China Sea.³³⁷ U.S. leaders tasked with furthering the U.S.–India defense partnership should remain aware of Indian sensitivities regarding formal military commitments and take proactive steps to adapt the content of U.S. initiatives, agreements, and exercises to accommodate the Indian perspective.

The second area of sensitivity for India is its increasing reliance on U.S. military hardware. Although the current upward trajectory of the U.S.–India defense partnership bodes well for continued Indian acquisition of U.S. defense technology, India remains wary of becoming overly reliant on military hardware sourced from a singular overseas source for fear of becoming vulnerable to outside pressure. This concern is rooted in the botched U.S. attempts to influence India’s approach to Pakistan in the early 1960s by withholding key U.S. defense exports.³³⁸ Washington’s use of critical defense exports as a carrot and stick to limit Indian strategic autonomy was “an important factor in the gradual falling away of the goodwill Indians felt toward the United States” in the early 1960s.³³⁹ India has gradually embraced the acquisition of U.S. military hardware in recent years, but U.S.–Indian relations are still affected by a “lingering trust deficit ... among some elements of the Indian elite [stemming] from a combination of history and an underlying sense of unease about Washington’s sometimes overbearing interest in India.”³⁴⁰ The present state of gradually increasing Indian defense acquisitions could come to an abrupt end if the United States ever reverted to using defense exports as leverage in U.S.–India relations.³⁴¹ Future U.S. leaders must remain aware of the troubled history of U.S. defense exports to

³³⁷ Samaranayake, Connell, and Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations*, 16–17.

³³⁸ Teresita C. Schaffer and Howard B. Schaffer, *India at the Global High Table: The Quest for Regional Primacy and Strategic Autonomy* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2016), 29, muse.jhu.edu/book/45356.

³³⁹ Schaffer and Schaffer, 30.

³⁴⁰ Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady As They Go*, 39.

³⁴¹ James Holmes, “The U.S.-India Naval Cooperation: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 154.

India to avoid repeating the same mistakes in the future and eschew the use of defense exports as a tool for political leverage against India.

Lastly, U.S. leaders should actively manage their expectations regarding their anticipated outcomes for the U.S.–India defense partnership. Many contemporary editorials “paint an absurdly optimistic future” regarding the potential outcomes for the U.S.–India defense partnership, and the reality is that the composition of the entente is much more nuanced and moderate than many might expect.³⁴² U.S. leaders must not overestimate the strength of the forces motivating Indian leaders to engage with the United States and the prospects for rapid change in the U.S.–Indian relationship. S. Amer Latif observes that U.S. leaders often approach India “with grand ambitions for deepening the partnership before they eventually realize the unique challenges of dealing with the Indian bureaucracy.”³⁴³ Their ambitions often lead to disappointment, and James Holmes cautions U.S. leaders, writing that: “It behooves Americans in particular not to assume too much about the power of a common language, a common heritage of British rule and a common form of government to unify a US-Indian league of seafaring democracies.”³⁴⁴ Thus, U.S. leaders must temper their ambitions for driving the U.S.–India defense partnership forward.

D. PARTING REMARKS

As of February 2020, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Donald Trump appear committed to furthering the U.S.–India defense partnership,³⁴⁵ and China shows no signs of slowing its naval expansion throughout the Indo-Pacific.³⁴⁶ These circumstances may change in the future, perhaps through a change in U.S. or Indian

³⁴² Timothy Hoyt, “India in the U.S. Naval Strategy,” in *India’s Naval Strategy and Asian Security* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 130.

³⁴³ Latif, *U.S.-India Military Engagement: Steady As They Go*, 31.

³⁴⁴ Holmes, “The U.S.-India Naval Cooperation: Moving Beyond Rhetoric,” 153.

³⁴⁵ Sanjeev Miglani, “After Raucous Welcome in India, Trump Clinches \$3 Billion Military Equipment Sale,” *Reuters*, February 25, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-usa-trump-idUSKCN20J0J5>.

³⁴⁶ Maizland Lindsay, *China’s Modernizing Military* (Council on Foreign Relations, 2020), <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-modernizing-military>.

leadership following national elections, or by changing dynamics within the People's Republic of China. Black swan events such as the current spread of the novel COVID-19 coronavirus also have the potential to dramatically impact regional growth trajectories and influence geopolitics in unpredictable ways.³⁴⁷ Despite the potential for unforeseen changes in Indo-Pacific power dynamics, U.S.–India naval cooperation will likely grow in its importance as the maritime trade flowing through the Indo-Pacific steadily increases and China vies for greater influence on the world stage.

³⁴⁷ Kristalina Georgieva, “Remarks by IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva to G20 on Economic Impact of COVID-19,” International Monetary Fund, February 22, 2020, <https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/02/22/pr2061-remarks-by-kristalina-georgieva-to-g20-on-economic-impact-of-covid-19>.

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