

U.S. AND INDIAN BILATERAL MARITIME SECURITY: A COUNTER  
TO CHINESE INFLUENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION

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General Studies

by

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

## ABSTRACT

U.S. AND INDIAN BILATERAL MARITIME SECURITY: A COUNTER TO CHINESE INFLUENCE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION, by MAJ Anthony W. Mamunes, 97 pages.

India, the world's largest democracy with a population of almost 1.4 billion, has emerged as a critical U.S. partner within the Indo-Pacific. With a coastline of over 7500 km, maritime security has emerged as a focal point of India's foreign policy. The U.S.-Indian bilateral partnership has grown significantly over the last two decades due to increased cooperation on economic and security issues. China has extended its influence into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by investing in infrastructure projects through the Belt and Road (BRI) initiative to protect its interests. To counter China's growing presence in the region, the U.S. must leverage the instruments of national power to improve India's own maritime security as a counterweight to Chinese ambitions. Through an analysis of the operational environment using a systems perspective, this study identifies India's primary maritime security gaps, and develops recommendations to improve India's security posture in support of U.S. interests.

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## ACRONYMS

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CSIS	Center for Strategic and International Studies
DIME	Diplomacy, Information, Military, Economy (Instruments of National Power)
DOD	Department of Defense
DOTMLPF-P	Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FON	Freedom of Navigation
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
JP	Joint Publication
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MITAGS	Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies
MSI	Southeast Asia Maritime Security Initiative
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USINDOPACOM	United States Indo-Pacific Command
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### Background

The Indian Ocean accounts for nearly 20% of the world's oceans and touches three different continents.<sup>1</sup> The maritime routes along the Indian Ocean also account for 40% of the world's energy supply from the Persian Gulf to Europe and Asia.<sup>2</sup> The U.S. has a significant interest in maintaining regional prosperity through maritime security to protect freedom of navigation. Both the U.S. and India have become increasingly concerned about Chinese naval presence in the region. The People's Republic of China (PRC) continues to search for alternate trade routes while cementing its status as a great power. To avoid possible conflict, India and the U.S. have called on all parties to settle disputes through peaceful means in recognition of the U.N. convention and law of the sea.<sup>3</sup> Territorial land disputes between India and China have only increased the risk of armed conflict in the maritime domain. Maritime security will continue to be a major issue in the twenty-first century as the Indian Ocean becomes a key geopolitical point of contention.

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<sup>1</sup> Katarzyna Kaszubska, "Indian Ocean," Observer Research Foundation, January 7, 2017, <https://orfonline.org/research/Indian-ocean/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. President, *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region* (Washington, DC: The White House, January 25, 2015), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/25/us-india-joint-strategic-vision-asia-pacific-and-india-ocean-region>.

Following India's independence in 1947, the U.S weakened diplomatic ties over India's developing nuclear program.<sup>4</sup> India's decision to refrain from choosing a side during the Cold War and the need for a strong ally in South Asia drove the U.S. toward closer ties with Pakistan. Tensions continued to rise during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, in which the U.S. aligned with Pakistan.<sup>5</sup> India proceeded to sign a twenty-year treaty of friendship with the USSR. At the end of the Cold War, India maintained its close ties with Russia.

In 1991, the Commander of U.S. Army Pacific envisioned a closer relationship between the U.S. and India.<sup>6</sup> This led to the "Kickstarter Proposals," creating the first military training exercises between the two countries in 1992.<sup>7</sup> The U.S. and India also created Executive Steering Groups to coordinate between each nation's Navy, Air Force, and Army.<sup>8</sup> Though relations were badly damaged once again after India announced a successful nuclear weapon test in 1998, both countries had a mutual interest in addressing transnational concerns such as terrorism and piracy in the Indian Ocean. Upon the beginning of the War on Terror in 2001, both nations identified mutual security interests in South Asia.

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<sup>4</sup> Zeeshan Muneer, "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement," (Research Brief, Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2016), 2, [https://csr.pk/pdf/rb/RB%20\\_LEMOA.pdf](https://csr.pk/pdf/rb/RB%20_LEMOA.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

Despite these historical struggles, India, the world's largest democracy with a population of almost 1.4 billion, has emerged as a key U.S. partner to maritime security in South Asia. In 2003, both nations agreed to statements of principle to support technology cooperation.<sup>9</sup> From 2009-2013, the U.S. served as the second-largest source of arms sales to India.<sup>10</sup> To promote maritime security in the Indian Ocean, the U.S. and India have increased intelligence collaboration, boosted naval interoperability through joint training exercises, and have coordinated on humanitarian aid and disaster relief.<sup>11</sup>

While U.S.-Chinese tensions continue to rise over the freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, Taiwan, and human rights violations, India-Chinese relations remain less certain, in part over the territorial dispute over the Line of Control (LOC). India has maintained, however, that it does not intend to tip the balance of power in South Asia.<sup>12</sup> China continues to seek new trade routes to escape the "Malacca dilemma," an idea stemming from the conquering of the straits by the Portuguese in 1511. The disruption in trade created tremendous problems for the Ming Dynasty.<sup>13</sup> This risk of losing access to key trade routes has led the PRC to construct a series of ports, roads, and

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<sup>9</sup> Muneer, "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement," 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>13</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon-The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House Trade Paper Backs, 2010), 10.

rail links to link landlocked China to the maritime trade routes of the Indian Ocean.<sup>14</sup> To protect these interests, China has also increased its naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

The increased threat from China to American interests has led to the emergence of India as a natural partner in maintaining peace, security, and economic freedom in South Asia. One way to achieve these objectives is through maritime security. The underlying premise of this analysis is that improved Indian maritime security will advance U.S. regional and strategic interests in response to a more assertive China.

### Problem Statement

China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean has threatened India's interest in promoting a secure and stable maritime domain. India's goal of maintaining the freedom of navigation and economic prosperity in the region aligns with U.S. national interests in preventing Chinese influence. China's economic expansion and growing military presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has raised fears among Indian and American policymakers that China intends to increase its control over access to key markets. Therefore, how does the U.S. assist India in improving its maritime security as a counterbalance to Chinese ambitions in South Asia?

### Purpose of the Study

This study aims to look for ways the U.S. can help India improve its maritime security posture. Informed by the U.S.-India bilateral relationship, this analysis

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<sup>14</sup> Kaplan, Monsoon, 10.

recommends ways the U.S. can improve Indian maritime security and assesses how those improvements advance U.S. strategic interests to counter China.

#### Primary Research Question

How can the U.S. best utilize the instruments of national power to improve India's maritime security in order to counter Chinese influence and aggression?

#### Secondary Research Questions

1. What are India's primary maritime security concerns with respect to China?
2. How would improvements to India's maritime security posture support U.S. interests in South Asia?
3. What capabilities or options does the U.S. possess to increase maritime security cooperation with India?

#### Assumptions

Three assumptions support this thesis. The first assumption is that India will not make any significant political or policy changes regarding its current maritime security posture or relationship with the U.S. The second assumption is that the U.S. will not make significant political or policy changes that would affect its approach to maritime security in South Asia. The third assumption is that there will not be any significant changes to the security situation in South Asia. This would include major hostilities such as the outbreak of war between India and Pakistan or armed conflict with China.

## Definition of Terms

Alliance – “The relationship that results from a formal agreement between two or more nations for broad, long-term objectives that further the common interests of the members.”<sup>15</sup>

Exclusive Economic Zone – “an area beyond and adjacent to the territorial sea of a coastal State who has sovereign rights for the purpose of exploring and exploiting, conserving, and managing natural resources, whether living or non-living, of the waters superjacent to the seabed and of the seabed and its subsoil, and with regard to other activities for the economic exploitation and exploration of the zone, such as production of energy from the water, currents, and winds.”<sup>16</sup>

Partner Nation – “In security cooperation, a nation with which the Department of Defense conducts security cooperation activities.”<sup>17</sup>

Right of Innocent Passage – “navigation through the territorial sea for the purpose of (a) traversing that sea without entering internal waters or calling at roadstead or port facility outside internal waters; or (b) proceeding to or from internal waters or a call at such roadstead or port facility. Passage must be continuous and expeditious but may

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Defense (DOD), *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, March 2017), 14.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations (UN), United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea: Agreement Relating to the Implementation of Part XI of the Convention (UNCLOS), December 10, 1982, Article 56, 1833 U.N.T.S. 397, [https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention\\_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm](https://www.un.org/depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/closindx.htm).

<sup>17</sup> DOD, *DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 165.

include stopping or anchoring when incidental to ordinary navigation or rendered necessary by unusual circumstances.”<sup>18</sup>

Security Cooperation – “includes all DOD interactions, programs, and activities with foreign security forces (FSF) and their institutions to build relationships that help promote U.S. interests.”<sup>19</sup>

South Asia – “a subregion of Asia, consisting of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and peninsular India. It includes the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka; Afghanistan and the Maldives are often considered part of South Asia as well.”<sup>20</sup>

#### Scope and Delimitations

This thesis primarily focuses on maritime security issues in the Indian Ocean from a U.S., Chinese, and Indian perspective. Consequently, this thesis does not conduct an in-depth analysis of the impact of maritime security initiatives on other stakeholders in the region, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. However, a central interest of this research is how improving India’s maritime security will affect the greater geopolitical region. This thesis utilizes primary sources to include both U.S. and U.S.-India joint documents as well as secondary sources to include academic journals and articles. All research material

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<sup>18</sup> UN, UNCLOS, Articles 17, 18.

<sup>19</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-20, *Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, May 23, 2017), I-1.

<sup>20</sup> Yury Konstantinovich Yefremov, Aleksandr Maximovich Ryabchikov, Nina Nikolaevna Alexeeva, and Calambur Sivaramamurti, “South Asia,” *Britannica*, September 1, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Asia>.

is open source and publicly available information. No classified material, including Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI), was used in this research. Additionally, all sources used are in the English language.

### Limitations

Due to the limited time available, there were also no travel, human subject research, or interviews.

### Significance of the Study

This study seeks to understand how the U.S. can further its vision and goals for South Asia and the greater Indo-Pacific to counter a more assertive China. The U.S. and India have shared interests in boosting prosperity through economic and security cooperation.<sup>21</sup> Through analysis of India's maritime security issues, the recommended solutions in this thesis can inform civilian and military planners about how the U.S. can best utilize its resources to achieve policy objectives in South Asia. As the Biden Administration is just in its second year, and senior leaders such as the Department of State and USINDOPACOM are also relatively new, this thesis is timely as the U.S. reevaluates its global posture. To contribute to this high-level discussion, this thesis's research methodology and recommendations are constructed to fit a whole-of-government approach to South Asia.

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<sup>21</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "U.S. Relations with India," (Bilateral Relations Fact Sheet, U.S. Department of State, January 20, 2021), <https://state.gov/u-s-relations-with-india/>.

## Summary

As China increases its naval presence in the Indian Ocean to protect its trade interests, the U.S. can look to India as a security partner in protecting American interests in the region. This study seeks to examine how the U.S. can help India improve its maritime security to resist Chinese influence. By examining the elements of national power, this thesis seeks to identify solutions to counter Chinese political and economic aims in South Asia that run counter to U.S. interests. This study can help U.S. policymakers understand India's maritime concerns in South Asia and assist in implementing initiatives to advance American interests.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the primary and secondary source literature used in the methodology and analysis throughout this thesis. This study's primary research question is how the U.S. can best utilize the instruments of national power to improve India's maritime security to counter Chinese influence and aggression. The secondary research questions of this thesis seek to identify what India's primary maritime concerns with respect to China are, how would improvements in India's maritime security support U.S. interests in South Asia, and finally, what capabilities or options does the U.S. possess to increase maritime security cooperation with India.

This chapter covers six broad research areas: the doctrinal concept framework; maritime security as a theoretical concept; freedom of navigation, India's concerns, and broad approach to maritime security; China's approach to South Asia from a maritime perspective, U.S. maritime interests in South Asia, and U.S.-India regional and bilateral security policies. These sections address the general topic areas used in the chapter 4 analysis.

#### Instruments of National Power

This section introduces the primary doctrinal concept used in this research study, the instruments of national power. This concept, derived from U.S. military and diplomatic strategy and policy, helps explain how the U.S. can influence various areas to bring about change. When examining the India-U.S. bilateral relationship, the

instruments of national power provide a useful lens to understand what options the U.S. has in determining policy. Chapter 3, Methodology, provides a more thorough explanation of how this study uses the instruments of national power to support operational design in informing an approach to solve a strategic problem. This section provides an overview of the literature that explains the concept of the instruments of national power.

The U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) joint doctrine discusses the framework of DIME, defining the instruments of national power as diplomacy, information, military, and economics. National strategy utilizes these instruments of national power to support policy objectives by developing a broad course of action or guidance at the national level.<sup>22</sup> The interaction between the instruments of national power is fundamental to U.S. activities in the strategic security environment.

Diplomacy is the principal instrument for engaging with foreign states and groups to advance U.S. interests. It is also the primary means for developing alliances, partnerships and requesting foreign support for U.S. military operations.<sup>23</sup> The Department of State (DOS) is the lead agency for foreign affairs. In the U.S. military, Ground Combatant Commanders (GCCs) are responsible for “aligning military activities with the diplomatic activities in their assigned areas of responsibility (AORs).”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, July 12, 2017), GL-9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, I-12.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

The informational instrument focuses on “creating, exploiting, and disrupting knowledge.”<sup>25</sup> This instrument of national power has become more important as the DOD operates within a more interconnected global network.<sup>26</sup> The DOD must understand how the planning and execution of DOD strategies and operations will be received or understood by key audiences.<sup>27</sup> Understanding these perceptions and audiences is key to both strategic and operational planning.

The military instrument of national power encompasses all military activities that support national objectives. Military force is coercive and generates effects through the “application of force.”<sup>28</sup> Military activities can also be useful in non-conflict situations such as humanitarian disasters and foreign relief. The military instrument is often combined with other elements of national power to achieve the desired effect. Its use can also vary in “purpose, scale, and risk” across a “continuum of conflict ranging from peace to war.”<sup>29</sup>

The economic instrument of national power focuses on furthering or constraining the prosperity of our allies, partners, and adversaries.<sup>30</sup> A strong U.S. economy with free access to global markets and resources is vital to an effective national security strategy. A

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<sup>25</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1-18, *Strategy* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 25, 2018), II-6.

<sup>26</sup> CJCS, JP 1, I-12.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, I-13.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, I-14.

<sup>30</sup> CJCS, JDN 1-18, II-7.

national security priority for the U.S. is expanding economic prosperity around the world.<sup>31</sup> The Department of the Treasury works with other governmental agencies, national governments, and financial institutions to boost economic growth and prevent economic and financial crises.<sup>32</sup> In a more globally connected world, the economic instrument of national power is vital to ensure that the U.S. maintains both a comparative and asymmetric advantage over its adversaries.

U.S. policymakers have acknowledged that there are additional factors that impact national security policy formulation.<sup>33</sup> Frameworks such as MIDFIELD (military, information, diplomacy, financial, intelligence, economics, law, development) provide additional ways to evaluate policy.<sup>34</sup> While these frameworks provide an additional set of factors to better understand the operational environment, the concept of DIME remains a sufficient baseline. Regardless of the framework used for analysis, national policies must account for risks and other undesired consequences following strategy implementation.

### Maritime Security

Maritime security is a general term for protecting vessels both internally and externally. The Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies defines maritime

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<sup>31</sup> U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (Washington, DC: The White House, March 2021), 9, <https://whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> CJCS, JP 1, I-12.

<sup>33</sup> Steven Aftergood, “Strategy: Directing the Instruments of National Power,” *Secrecy News (2000–2021)* (blog), *Federation of American Scientists*, April 30, 2018, <https://fas.org/blogs/secrecy/2018/04/strategy-jcs/>.

<sup>34</sup> CJCS, JDN 1-18, viii.

security as all areas “from which ships and maritime operations need protecting from terrorism, piracy, robbery, illegal trafficking of goods and people, and illegal fishing and pollution.”<sup>35</sup> Maritime security also includes preserving freedom of navigation and maritime domain awareness to protect economic prosperity. Maritime security is a global issue with numerous stakeholders with different interests. Cooperation and coordination are vital to creating a multilateral and bilateral consensus among states, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to enforce international norms.

### Freedom of Navigation

Rene Jean Dupuy and Daniel Vignes define Freedom of Navigation (FON) as “the fact that each State is entitled to claim – apart from the exceptions provided for by international law – that ships flying its flag should suffer no interference from other States.”<sup>36</sup> The U.S. policy since 1983 has stated that the U.S. will “exercise and assert its navigation” in recognition of the “balance of interests” outlined in the Law of the Sea (LOS).<sup>37</sup> The U.S. FON program also discusses the critical need for America to “protect its maritime rights throughout the world.”<sup>38</sup> India also maintains a significant economic

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<sup>35</sup> Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies, “Guide to Maritime Security,” (blog), *MITAGS*, June 25, 2021, <https://mitags.org/security-guide/>.

<sup>36</sup> Rene Jean Dupuy and Daniel Vignes, “Navigation,” in *A Handbook On The New Law of the Sea*, vol. 2, ed. Académie de droit international de La Haye, 836 (Boston: Brill, 1991), [https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/media/pplse/nij9780792310631\\_835976.pdf?id=special-editions/navigation-ej.9780792310631.835\\_1691.2#pagemode=bookmarks&page=1](https://referenceworks.brillonline.com/media/pplse/nij9780792310631_835976.pdf?id=special-editions/navigation-ej.9780792310631.835_1691.2#pagemode=bookmarks&page=1).

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of State (DOS), “Maritime Security and Navigation,” January 20, 2009, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/maritimesecurity/index.htm>.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

interest in preserving the freedom of navigation throughout the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India's territorial sea is 193,834 square kilometers, while its exclusive economic zone (EEZ) encompasses over 5.2 million square kilometers.<sup>39</sup> In 2014, the SLOCs across the IOR supported over four-fifths of global trade.<sup>40</sup> Enforcing the principle of freedom of navigation allows countries in the IOR to engage in free trade to support economic growth.

### India's Concerns and Approach to Maritime Security

With a coast spanning over 7500 km, India has a significant interest in protecting its economic and security interests across the IOR.<sup>41</sup> According to the Rand Study, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific, India*, India also has the largest economy in South Asia, with a GDP adjusted to reflect purchasing power parity of \$9.47 trillion.<sup>42</sup> This makes it the third-largest in the world behind the U.S. and China.<sup>43</sup> While India's economy continues to experience massive growth, it remains largely dependent on energy imports, which in 2015-16 made up 81% of its oil consumption.<sup>44</sup> Additionally, over 95% of India's international trade, measured by

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<sup>39</sup> Gopal Suri, "India's Maritime Security Concerns and the Indian Ocean Region," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 11, no. 3 (July- September 2016): 240, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45341959>.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 238.

<sup>42</sup> Jonah Blank, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: India* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2021), 9.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Suri, "India's Maritime Security Concerns and the Indian Ocean Region," 241.

volume, occurs by sea.<sup>45</sup> India's geography and reliance on energy imports have made maritime security a top priority for New Delhi.

Upon attaining independence in 1947, India embraced a foreign policy focused on building diplomatic relations with other newly developing states in Asia.<sup>46</sup> In his writings, Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru often referenced these other Southeastern Asian states as "Greater India."<sup>47</sup> This created uneasiness among countries in Southeast Asia who worried that a resurgent and dominant India would seek to control them. These fears continued to increase due to India's rapid growth in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>48</sup> This led to closer relations between Southeast Asia and China, while India increased its cooperation with the Soviet Union.<sup>49</sup>

With the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the economic liberalization of its client states, Indian Prime Minister Narshima Rao sought to grow the country's economy rapidly.<sup>50</sup> India launched its "Look East Policy," a strategy that sought to promote economic cooperation and integration with Southeast Asia and the overall Asia-Pacific

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Vaibhav Dewan, "India's Act East Policy: Strategic Rationales and Maritime Strategy," Security Distillery, May 31, 2021, <https://thesecuritydistillery.org/all-articles/indias-act-east-policy-strategic-rationales-and-maritime-strategy#:~:text=Since%20coming%20to%20power%20in,within%20India's%20North%20Eastern%20region.>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Dewan, "India's Act East Policy."

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

region.<sup>51</sup> Hoping to become a “tiger” economy, India became a dialogue partner with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1992.<sup>52</sup> The first ASEAN-Indian meeting was held in 2002, with an agreed upon working economic framework in 2003.<sup>53</sup> India later became ASEAN’s fourth-largest partner for trade, moving over 86.9 billion U.S. dollars’ worth of goods in 2020.<sup>54</sup> Economic integration in the IOR has also been furthered by the East Asia Summit (EAS), a meeting of eighteen member states including the ten ASEAN countries with Japan, South Korea, China, India, Australia, NZ, U.S., and Russia.<sup>55</sup> The ASEAN countries and India have made significant progress in working together to build regional infrastructure such as road and rail transportation lines.<sup>56</sup> The complementary interests of both groups in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific leave the potential for further cooperation in influencing the Chinese to respect international norms.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Lakhan Mehrotra, “India’s Look East Policy: Its Origin and Development,” *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 7, no. 1 (January-March 2012): 75, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45341805>.

<sup>52</sup> Dewan, “India’s Act East Policy.”

<sup>53</sup> Mehrotra, “India’s Look East Policy,” 77.

<sup>54</sup> Dewan, “India’s Act East Policy.”

<sup>55</sup> Mehrotra, “India’s Look East Policy,” 80.

<sup>56</sup> Mehrotra, “India’s Look East Policy,” 77.

<sup>57</sup> Economic and Political Weekly Editorial Board, “India’s Look East Policy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 45, no. 48 (November 27-December 3, 2010): 8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25764167>.

In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally introduced India's rebranded "Act East Policy" at the twelfth ASEAN-India Summit.<sup>58</sup> This policy change reflected India's more assertive foreign policy as a rising power and its efforts to promote a more proactive approach to engagements in the region.<sup>59</sup> Modi also committed to strengthening the India-U.S. bilateral security relationship.<sup>60</sup> Due to the importance of regional trade and resources supporting its geopolitical interests, India has become increasingly concerned with the maritime domain. This has led to increases in spending on India's naval capabilities and maritime infrastructure.<sup>61</sup> The growth of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has also led India to seek deeper relations with other Asian countries concerned with China's rise to ensure a favorable balance of power in the region.<sup>62</sup> India continues, however, to seek opportunities to manage its relationship with China by maintaining economic ties while also cooperating on issues of mutual self-interest.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Chietigij Bajpae, "Dephasing India's Look East/Act East Policy," *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 39, no. 2 (August 2017): 358, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44683773>.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 348.

<sup>60</sup> Jesse B. Gale, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative," (CSIS Brief, Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, April 2, 2018), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/quadrilateral-security-dialogue-and-maritime-silk-road-initiative>.

<sup>61</sup> Dhruva Jaishankar, *Acting East: India in the Indo-Pacific*, The Brookings India Impact Series 102019-02 (New Delhi: Brookings Institution India Center, October 2019), 6, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Acting-East-India-in-the-INDO-PACIFIC-without-cutmark.pdf>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

India's strategic thinking has historically focused on the continent due to direct threats to its well-being from Japan, Pakistan, and China.<sup>64</sup> India has started to engage in an expansive maritime strategy, driven by great power aspirations, a strategic rivalry with China, and the protection of economic interests. Former Indian Foreign Minister Pranado Mukherjee observed, "After nearly a millennia of inward and landward focus, we are once again turning our gaze outwards and seawards, which is the natural direction of view of a nation seeking to reestablish itself, not simply as a continental power, but even more so as a maritime power, and as one that is of significance on the world stage."<sup>65</sup> Indian thinkers are also heavily influenced by the Naval Strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, assigning him the remark, though incorrectly: "whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. In the 21st century, the destiny of the world will be decided on its water."<sup>66</sup>

During the 1990s, India significantly increased naval spending to develop a "blue water" navy to enhance India's ability to project power in the region.<sup>67</sup> India has continued to develop its maritime power in the 21st century to advance its security architecture while restricting China's ability to build security relationships in the IOR. Indian maritime security has primarily focused on Africa's East Coast, to include the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. India has also emphasized establishing a security

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<sup>64</sup> David Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean," *Security Challenges* 6, no. 3 (Spring 2010): 1, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26459796>.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

presence in the central Indian Ocean along the east-west running SLOCs and the Malacca Strait due to their impact on India's economy and international trade.<sup>68</sup> India's secondary maritime security interests stretch further east to include the South China and East China Seas.<sup>69</sup> India has also become increasingly concerned about the Chinese presence in the IOR, worrying that China will inevitably challenge India's influence in the region.

Strategically, India does not focus on any one single point, as each area has its own set of different threats and stakeholders.<sup>70</sup> This section reviews India's approach to protecting its interests in the different geographical areas of the IOR. The Southwest Indian Ocean serves as an important access point that connects the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. India continues to maintain a close relationship with Mauritius, in which over 70 percent of the population is of Indian ethnic origin.<sup>71</sup> India has also been seen as the primary maritime security provider for Mozambique and continues to grow its maritime security relationship with Madagascar and Seychelles.<sup>72</sup> Former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Prakash, once remarked that India "cannot afford to have any hostile or inimical power threatening the island states in the region."<sup>73</sup> India has also conducted annual exercises with partners such as France and South Africa in hopes of preventing China

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>69</sup> Suri, "India's Maritime Security Concerns and the Indian Ocean Region," 240.

<sup>70</sup> Kaplan, *Monsoon*, 15.

<sup>71</sup> Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean," 7.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 10.

from building its relationships in this region.<sup>74</sup> The countries located in the Southwest Indian Ocean are strategically crucial to India due to their importance to international trade. This area is also likely to remain an important area for India's economy in the future as there is thought to be almost 100 trillion cubic feet of natural gas underneath the Mozambique Channel.<sup>75</sup>

In the Northwest Indian Ocean, India has historically exercised a significant political and economic role stemming from British India's role in engaging in a pro-Arab foreign policy despite significant strains with Pakistan during the 19th and 20th centuries.<sup>76</sup> The Strait of Hormuz also serves as a major transit route for Middle Eastern oil, linking the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman to the Arabian Sea, which borders the Indian Ocean.<sup>77</sup> India has worked to build security and economic partnerships with key players in the region. In September 2021, India and Oman signed an agreement to boost information sharing on shipping.<sup>78</sup> Since 1993, the Indian Navy has also participated with

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>75</sup> Darshana Baruah, "Islands as Game Changers in the Indian Ocean," Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, April 20, 2018, <https://amti.csis.org/islands-game-changers-indian-ocean/>.

<sup>76</sup> Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean," 10.

<sup>77</sup> Darshana M. Baruah, "Strengthening Delhi's Strategic Partnerships in the Indian Ocean," (Center for a New American Security, Washington, DC, October 23, 2019), <https://www.cnas.org/publications/reports/strengthening-delhis-strategic-partnerships-in-the-indianocean>.

<sup>78</sup> Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India, Oman Sign Maritime Pact; Foreign Ministers of India-Oman-Iran Meet in Muscat," *The Economic Times*, December 24, 2019, [https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.economictimes/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-oman-sign-maritime-pact-foreign-ministers-of-india-oman-iran-meet-in-muscat/amp\\_articles/72960154.cms](https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.economictimes/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-oman-sign-maritime-pact-foreign-ministers-of-india-oman-iran-meet-in-muscat/amp_articles/72960154.cms).

the Royal Navy of Oman in the biennial maritime exercise Naseem Al Bahr.

Additionally, India maintains close ties with Qatar, signing an agreement in 2008 to increase both maritime security and intelligence sharing.<sup>79</sup> While the U.S. will not allow India to have an exclusive role in the Northwest Indian Ocean, India may play a more significant role in maritime security operations as the U.S. continues to shift focus from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific.

The Central Indian Ocean consists of two major island chains: the British administered Indian Ocean Territory and the Maldives.<sup>80</sup> India sees the Maldives as part of India's sphere of influence and maintains a close relationship with the Maldivian military by providing them with equipment and training.<sup>81</sup> India also signed a security agreement with the Maldives in 2009, formalizing the use of Gan Island and the stationing of aircraft and vessels in the central Maldives.<sup>82</sup> These island chains remain strategically important to India's maritime security as they reside along the east and west running SLOCs in the IOR.

India has also placed significant focus on the Northeast Indian Ocean. India maintains a major presence in the Andaman Sea and has developed bilateral security arrangements with nations in the region to secure the Malacca Strait.<sup>83</sup> Security of the

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> Brewster, "An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean," 11.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

Andaman Islands and Malacca Strait is extremely important because control of these chokepoints helps to protect India's trade and global commerce. India's primary economic and security partner in the Northeast Indian Ocean is Singapore. Both nations maintain close ties through joint exercises and technology cooperation. Singapore sees India as a key player in the balance of power in the region, especially toward China.<sup>84</sup> Finally, this region has important ramifications for the freedom of navigation and global trade. The trade routes in the Northeast Indian Ocean are believed to account for an estimated one-third of global trade and over 70 percent of China's energy imports from the Middle East.<sup>85</sup> This may lead to future tensions, risking greater conflict between India and China.

Gopat Suri identifies several of India's maritime security concerns in his article "India's Maritime Security Concerns and the Indian Ocean Region." He identifies several of these concerns to include control of geographic choke points that impact economic activity, threats to sea lines of communication (SLOCs), regional instability, piracy, trafficking, maritime terrorism, and the regional presence of external militaries.<sup>86</sup> Instability at choke points like the Strait of Malacca can significantly impact regional and global trade. Additionally, both traditional and non-traditional adversaries can threaten SLOCs. India's increasing dependence on sea trade has made these two areas extremely important for maritime security. The sheer size of the Indian Ocean also presents a

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>86</sup> Suri, "India's Maritime Security Concerns and the Indian Ocean Region," 242-245.

logistical challenge to the Indian Navy, requiring cooperation to protect its interests through maritime security.<sup>87</sup> India continues to work with its partners in addressing piracy, drug trafficking, and maritime terrorism. In response to the 11/26 terrorist acts in Mumbai in 2008, India worked to develop more comprehensive monitoring to identify future terror plots.<sup>88</sup> India also remains concerned about the increasing Chinese Naval presence in the region. China has built a base in Djibouti and has acquired access facilities in Malaysia. Many Indian analysts see China's economic expansion in the IOR as a "disguise for China's military ambitions."<sup>89</sup> China has also threatened India's influence in the region through its efforts to create economic access to the Gwadar Port in Pakistan and Chittagong Port in Bangladesh.<sup>90</sup>

#### China's Naval Posture and Maritime Interests in South Asia

Former Chinese Defense Minister Chi Hoatian described his country's objectives as "to consolidate national defense, resist foreign aggression, safeguard state sovereignty, maritime rights and interests, and maintain national security and unity."<sup>91</sup> Historically, China has not actively engaged in an effort to project power beyond its coastal waters.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 243.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>89</sup> Anthony Kleven, "Is China's Maritime Silk Road a Military Strategy?" *The Diplomat*, December 8, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/is-chinas-maritime-silk-road-a-military-strategy/>.

<sup>90</sup> Dewan, "India's Act East Policy."

<sup>91</sup> Harvir Sharma, "China's Security Interests in the Indian Ocean Rim Countries and India's Maritime Security," *India Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (October-December 2001): 67, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45073276>.

The strategic focus of Chinese maritime strategy has changed, however, due to increased global trade and the expansion of its shipbuilding industry.<sup>92</sup> This has prompted China to build a “blue water” fleet with global reach.<sup>93</sup> The People’s Liberation Navy (PLN) has also increased its number of ships to become the largest in the world.<sup>94</sup>

In its study of the PLA’s military strategy, the China Aerospace Studies Institute describes three historical phases in the development of the PLN. From 1949-1970, the Chinese Navy focused on “coastal defense to inshore defense.” This phase focused on the safe transport of vessels along rivers and the coast as well as providing unity to homeland China.<sup>95</sup> The second phase of “offshore defense” occurred from the 1980s to the early 21st century. During this time, naval operations were to only be for the defense of China, and the protection of its island chains.<sup>96</sup> The third and final phase started in 2004 and continues today. The PLN has expanded its role to support an “offshore defense and blue-water defense” to protect China’s growth, survival, and economic development.<sup>97</sup> China

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Christopher Colley, “A Future Chinese Indian Ocean Fleet?” *War on the Rocks*, April 2, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/04/a-future-chinese-indian-ocean-fleet/>.

<sup>95</sup> Shou Xiaosong, *In Their Own Words: Foreign Military Thought, Science of Military Strategy (2013)* (Montgomery, AL: China Aerospace Studies Institute, 2013), 260, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/CASI/Display/Article/2485204/plas-science-of-military-strategy-2013/>.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 262.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

sees key trade routes such as the Malacca Strait as the “lifelines to their socioeconomic development.”<sup>98</sup>

In 2013, Xi Jinping launched China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a bold infrastructure project that seeks to expand China’s economic and political influence around the globe.<sup>99</sup> China hopes to bring in new investment and additional economic markets to boost imported goods for their domestic population.<sup>100</sup> Additionally, China is looking to secure its long-term energy supplies. At the Association of Southeast Asia Nations (ASEAN) summit in 2013, Xi Jinping also announced plans for a 21st century Maritime Silk Road. India remains worried that the true objective of the BRI and Maritime Silk Road is for China to dominate Asia. Some experts have described China’s efforts to construct ports to boost its military and economic power in South Asia as a “String of Pearls” strategy.<sup>101</sup> This strategy also involves developing relationships and commercial interests along the Indian Ocean, facilitating closer diplomatic ties with Pakistan, while simultaneously maintaining good political relationships with other countries in South Asia.<sup>102</sup> Many in the Indian security community believe China is

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<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 264.

<sup>99</sup> Andrew Chatzky and James McBride, “China’s Massive Belt and Road Initiative,” Council on Foreign Relations, January 28, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-massive-belt-and-road-initiative>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Brewster, “An Indian Sphere of Influence in the Indian Ocean,” 5.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

engaged in a plan of maritime “encirclement” to keep India focused on South Asia.<sup>103</sup>

The most ambitious part of the BRI initiative, and a growing concern for India, is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).<sup>104</sup> Once the Gwadar Port in Pakistan is completed, China may be able to effectively bypass the shipping routes of the Indian Ocean.<sup>105</sup>

The relationship between India and China has gone through periods of both cooperation and competition. The two countries have become major powers in the regions by expanding their military capabilities in the maritime domain. The economic independence between both countries, however, has served to deter armed conflict.<sup>106</sup> It remains unclear if China has the resources or political capital to become the dominant navy in the Indian Ocean while simultaneously protecting its interests in the Western Pacific.

Dr. Christopher Colley, an Assistant professor of Security Studies at the National Defense College of the United Arab Emirates, has discussed the idea of China creating a two ocean fleet.<sup>107</sup> While international headlines often focus on the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean remains a key area for the Chinese economy. In terms of economic activity,

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>104</sup> Blank, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: India*, 48.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Chietigj Bajpae, “China-India: Regional Dimensions of the Bilateral Relationship,” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 9, no. 4 (Winter 2015): 109, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26271280>.

<sup>107</sup> Colley, “A Future Chinese Indian Ocean Fleet?”

“over 95 percent of China’s trade with the Middle East, Africa, and Europe passes through the Indian Ocean.”<sup>108</sup> Hu Bo, director of Beijing University’s Center for Maritime Strategy Studies, argues that the future main priorities for China will be the Western Pacific, followed by the North Indian Ocean.<sup>109</sup> The geography of the Indian Ocean and the logistical requirements of building a second fleet may make such an endeavor, however, unrealistic in the short term. China will also need to conduct a cost-benefit analysis on whether future aircraft carriers will be required to develop an effective second fleet in the Indian Ocean.<sup>110</sup>

#### U.S. Maritime Interests and Security Policy in South Asia

The importance of South Asia to U.S. interests is seen in many of America’s strategic guidance documents. American President Joseph R. Biden’s 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* states that the U.S. will “lead first through diplomacy” with a commitment to international cooperation.<sup>111</sup> The *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* also identifies China as the “only competitor capable of combining its economic, diplomatic, military, and technological power to mount a sustained challenge to a stable and open international system.”<sup>112</sup> The 2018 *National Defense Strategy* asserts that China is “leveraging military modernization, influence

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 3.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 8.

operations, and predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage.”<sup>113</sup> With China serving as the main strategic competitor to the U.S. in the Indo-Pacific, U.S. analysts have placed a renewed focus on the IOR. The U.S. remains committed to maintaining stability in such a large and geographically diverse region. The geopolitical and economic importance of the Indian Ocean cannot be overstated, as a significant amount of international trade flows through its waters. It is also home to important economic areas such as Africa, the Middle East, and Asia.<sup>114</sup> The U.S. remains focused on protecting its international commerce while continuing to strengthen relationships with regional allies.<sup>115</sup>

The Indo-Pacific Command 2021 and 2022 posture statements also show how important the U.S. views its partnership with India in the face of Chinese assertiveness. The U.S. Navy continues to focus its efforts on promoting peace and prosperity in a free and open Indo-Pacific. The U.S. Navy has also increased its Indo-Pacific maritime coordination by exploring ways with allies and partners to increase situational awareness

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<sup>113</sup> Secretary of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, January 18, 2018), 2, <https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>.

<sup>114</sup> Darshana M. Baruah, “What is Happening in the Indian Ocean?” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 3, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/03/03/what-is-happening-in-indian-ocean-pub-83948>.

<sup>115</sup> D. S. Rajan, “China in the Indian Ocean: Competing Priorities,” in *The Maritime Great Game: India, China, US & the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi, India: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2014), 9, [http://www.ipcs.org/issue\\_select.php?recNo=547](http://www.ipcs.org/issue_select.php?recNo=547).

within the maritime domain.<sup>116</sup> The U.S. also strongly supports establishing information fusion centers, focusing on maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean.<sup>117</sup>

### U.S.-India Bilateral Relationship

The U.S.-India partnership is based on shared democratic values.<sup>118</sup> India's interests in the IOR are compatible with the U.S. as they seek to support the freedom of navigation and free trade. Both countries addressed their shared principles in the 2015 *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region*.<sup>119</sup> In the document, the U.S. and India call on all stakeholders in the region to work with one another to solve disagreements through international law.<sup>120</sup>

The U.S. and India continue to strengthen their partnership on maritime security through a series of bilateral agreements such as the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), the Communications, Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), the Industrial Security Annex (ISA), and the Defense technology and

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<sup>116</sup> “Statement of John C. Aquilino, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture,” (Washington, DC, March 10, 2022), 2, <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/AS/AS00/20220309/114487/HHRG-117-AS00-Wstate-AquilinoJ-20220309.pdf>.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>118</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, “U.S. Relations with India.”

<sup>119</sup> Aman Thakker, *US-India Maritime Security Cooperation* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 8, 2019), <https://www.csis.org/analysis/us-india-maritime-security-cooperation>.

<sup>120</sup> U.S. President, *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region*.

trade initiative.<sup>121</sup> These agreements address a wide range of issues to include the sharing of technology, intelligence collaboration, and interoperability. COMCASA enhances information sharing while ISA allows for the transfer of technologies to support defense production.<sup>122</sup> The LEMOA includes provisions for port calls, training, joint exercises, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.<sup>123</sup> Many of these agreements have come after decades of negotiations. It is important to note that these agreements do not establish a formal strategic partnership between the U.S. against regional rivals such as China. They do, however, permit both countries' militaries to use each other's bases to refuel, promote interoperability between naval forces, and enhance India's capabilities against China's growing naval power.<sup>124</sup>

While the U.S. and India have a shared interest in maintaining a rules-based international order, challenges remain. India has long subscribed to a policy of "non-alignment."<sup>125</sup> Though China has emerged as a regional competitor, India still desires to balance its security engagements with a range of partners.<sup>126</sup> A Rand Study on the Indo-

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<sup>121</sup> "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson, U.S. Navy, Commander, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command before the Senate Armed Services Committee on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," (Washington, DC, March 9, 2021), 14, [https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/davidson\\_03-09-21](https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/download/davidson_03-09-21).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Muneer, "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement," 4.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>126</sup> Blank, *Regional Responses to U.S.- China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: India*, 79.

Pacific observed that India sees China as “too threatening to be considered a friend but too dangerous to be treated as an overt enemy.”<sup>127</sup> This may impact the extent to which the U.S. can truly develop a strategic partnership with India.

### Summary

Through an overview of the relevant literature, this chapter explains some key concepts and provides context for the analysis of the thesis. This literature review reflects several different sources describing India’s maritime security concerns and the interests of other stakeholders such as the U.S. and China. This thesis continues the academic discussion by analyzing how the U.S. can support India’s maritime security goals through the framework of the instruments of national power to best support U.S. national policy objectives. This approach provides new analysis of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship, identifying obstacles to new U.S. initiatives in South Asia. Further, this analysis recommends U.S. actions to strengthen India’s maritime security as the Biden Administration contends with a more aggressive China in the Indo-Pacific.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 48.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Chapter 3 explains the methodology used to conduct the analysis in this thesis. This study will utilize a qualitative approach through case study and document analysis to address the research questions and understand the strategic and operational environment within the IOR. This analysis will look to answer the primary research question of how the U.S. can best utilize the instruments of national power to improve India's maritime security in order to counter Chinese influence and aggression. The analysis will also provide insight on answering the secondary research questions by addressing what India's primary maritime concerns with respect to China are, how improvements in India's maritime security support U.S. interests in South Asia, and finally, what capabilities or options does the U.S. possess to increase maritime security cooperation with India.

First, this chapter explains the doctrinal basis of using a systems perspective to understand the strategic and operational environment within the context of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. This concept is defined in Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Planning* (JP 3-0) and Joint Publication 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment* (JP 2-01.3). This chapter will then explain how the analysis of the operational environment will help to identify gaps in India's maritime security strategy. Next, this chapter will describe the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model and how it can be used to identify solutions for gaps in India's maritime security strategy through the lens of DIME. Additionally, this chapter will describe the U.S. Army War College's

feasibility, acceptability, and suitability test with additional risk analysis for the recommended solutions. Finally, this chapter will review how this thesis answers both the primary and secondary research questions outlined above.

### Doctrinal Basis – Systems Perspective and PMESII

Reviewing the political, military, economic, social, information, and infrastructure (PMESII) systems that drive the U.S.-India bilateral partnership is an appropriate method for this analysis because it provides an effective framework to help analyze the operational environment (OE). This analysis will assist in developing policy solutions that support U.S. interests. JP 3-0 defines a system as a “functionally, physically, or behaviorally related group of regularly interacting or interdependent elements forming a unified whole.”<sup>128</sup> The U.S.-India bilateral partnership can be best understood within the context of an overall system. This analysis will examine the “complex set of political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure (PMESII) systems” within the IOR and how they interact with one another.<sup>129</sup>

In military operations, a system perspective can increase the Joint Force Commander’s (JFC) knowledge of how different systems affect one another and assist in identifying elements of design such as centers of gravity and decisive points.<sup>130</sup> A systems perspective also helps the JFC and their staffs “describe how military actions

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<sup>128</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 17, 2017), IV-3.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, IV-4.

affect other agency and multinational partners.”<sup>131</sup> The evaluation of these systems is then combined into a “single overall assessment that focuses on the impact of the OE on Courses of Action available to friendly and adversary forces.”<sup>132</sup>

While normally used within the context of military operations, this thesis will use this framework to understand the strategic environment and India’s maritime concerns with respect to China within the IOR. This analysis will help identify the importance of maritime security concerns for the major powers in the region and enable the development of policy solutions that support U.S. interests.

#### Doctrinal Basis – U.S. Army War College Strategy Model

Utilizing the above systems perspective analysis, this thesis will use the U.S. Army War Colleges Strategy model to identify the ends, ways, and means for American policymakers to address India’s maritime security. Arthur F. Lykke Jr. developed this strategy model, using ends, ways, and means to describe a general theory of strategy.<sup>133</sup> He determined for a strategy to be valid, it must have an “appropriate balance of objectives, concepts, and resources, or its success is at greater risk.”<sup>134</sup> Lykke defined

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<sup>131</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 2-01.3, *Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 1, 2020), xiii.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>133</sup> Richard H. Yarger, “Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., 4th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010), 45, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2088.pdf>.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

ends as the “what” is to be accomplished.<sup>135</sup> This desired end state of any given strategy is ultimately tied to national interests.<sup>136</sup> This thesis uses a variety of U.S. policy documents, such as the 2021 *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* and the 2022 *U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy*, to determine American objectives concerning India’s maritime security and the threat of China. Lykke defined ways as “how the ends will be accomplished by the employment of resources.”<sup>137</sup> This study will provide solutions or “ways” in which the U.S. can improve India’s maritime security to advance U.S. interests in the IOR. In his model, he defined “means” as the resources that will be utilized to apply the ways to accomplishing determined objectives.<sup>138</sup> In this analysis, means will be synonymous with the resources required to implement the proposed solutions in advancing India’s maritime security. Finally, Lykke defines risk as the “gap between what is to be achieved and the concepts and resources available to achieve the objective.”<sup>139</sup> This thesis will provide an overview of the inherent risks of policy actions to improve India’s maritime security. Lykke’s model provides a clear and comprehensive approach that can assist U.S. policymakers in formulating a coherent strategy for the IOR.

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<sup>135</sup> Yarger, “Toward a Theory of Strategy,” 49.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

Doctrinal Basis – U.S. Army War College Feasibility, Acceptability, Suitability Test

This thesis will also conduct a feasibility, acceptability, and suitability (FAS) test to validate and analyze different policy options.<sup>140</sup> While there are alternative methods to analyze the effectiveness of a given policy or strategy, FAS provides a simple and clear approach to determine a policy’s overall effectiveness.<sup>141</sup> The *U.S. Army War College’s Guide to National Security Issues* provides helpful definitions on how to approach an analysis using FAS. Alan G. Stolberg defines suitability as determining if a policy option will “reasonably attain the policy objective end state.”<sup>142</sup> He also points out that if the analysis underpinning the formulation of a specific policy is faulty, the strategy is unlikely to be suitable.<sup>143</sup> Stolberg describes acceptability as whether the policy is “proportional to the overall effort required, i.e., whether the benefit of the option is worth the cost.”<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, acceptability examines the material cost of executing the action, the political cost in terms of domestic and international support, and the moral cost of whether the action is acceptable by international norms.<sup>145</sup> Finally, he defines

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<sup>140</sup> Alan G. Stolberg, “Making National Security Policy in the 21st Century,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 2, *National Security Policy and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., 5th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2012), 51, [pubs-repository.s3-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/2183.pdf](https://pubs-repository.s3-us-gov-west-1.amazonaws.com/2183.pdf).

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid., 52.

feasibility as whether the policy option can be “accomplished with available resources over a contemplated amount of time.”<sup>146</sup> This thesis will utilize these definitions when determining whether the policy proposals developed effectively promote U.S. interests.

### Doctrinal Basis – Risk

Risk increases for a given strategy when there are major gaps in what must be achieved and the available resources to do so.<sup>147</sup> Strategies must seek to minimize risk by balancing ends, ways, and means.<sup>148</sup> Risk can also be difficult to assess, especially in international relations. Free-thinking decision makers on both sides of an issue ensure a certain degree of uncertainty on how nations will react to a given strategy.<sup>149</sup> Another difficulty in assessing risk is that the ends or objectives of a given strategy may be abstract while the ways and means are more concrete.<sup>150</sup> This is certainly true when it comes to U.S. interests in promoting India’s maritime security in the IOR. American strategic documents are often ambiguous in their objectives, focusing on broad concepts such as economic prosperity. Finally, risk can often occur as the “unintended results of

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<sup>146</sup> Stolberg, “Making National Security Policy in the 21st Century,” 51.

<sup>147</sup> Yarger, “Toward a Theory of Strategy,” 49.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>149</sup> James F. Holcomb, “Managing Strategic Risk,” in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues*, vol. 1, *Theory of War and Strategy*, ed. J. Boone Bartholomees, Jr., 4th ed. (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2010), 68, <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/2088.pdf>.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*

actions taken within a government to secure itself.”<sup>151</sup> In their article on assessing risk at the national strategic level, Germann and Gregg describe “compounding risk” as occurring when “actions conducted by one department or agency in the government, such as the military, could incur an acceptable level of risk for that particular organization, but could also affect other agencies and cause unintended risk to broader national security interests.”<sup>152</sup> This form of risk can present itself when a whole of government approach is applied to a complex and non-linear problem set.<sup>153</sup> In a dynamic and changing environment like the IOR, it is important that policy makers continually assess risk to make adjustments to strategy.

### Analytical Approach

This thesis uses a systems perspective as a lens to study Indian maritime security and the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. The study does not aim to develop detailed strategic and operational plans. Instead, this thesis analyzes various source documents through the elements of PMESII to answer the research questions, identify gaps, and recommend ways the U.S. can approach India’s maritime security to advance U.S. interests.

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<sup>151</sup> Wade A. Germann and Heather S. Gregg, “Assessing Risk at the National Strategic Level: Visualization Tools for Military Planners,” *Parameters* 51, no. 3 (2021): 44, <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3078&context=parameters>.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*

The analytical methodology in Chapter 4 has seven major components: first, an assessment of the IOR, focusing on the U.S.-India bilateral relationship as it pertains to maritime security and China; second, an identification of gaps in India's maritime security; third, identification of U.S. objectives or ends for maritime security cooperation with India through the framework of DIME; fourth, identification of recommended solutions or ways to enhance maritime security cooperation utilizing DIME; fifth, identification of U.S. resources or means to implement the recommended solutions through the framework of DIME; sixth, an examination of the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of the recommended solutions supplemented with an analysis of the benefits and risks to the U.S., and finally, answers to the primary and secondary research questions of the study.

The framework underpinning the analysis of U.S. ends, ways, and means is the instruments of national power, or DIME. As discussed in chapter 2, the four instruments of national power provide a holistic view of how nations utilize their capabilities to achieve national objectives. The use of both the PMESII and DIME framework throughout the thesis also provides consistency for the analysis. This study uses a combination of primary and secondary resources to better understand the goals and objectives of stakeholders in the region. While the primary sources describe national strategies in more detail, secondary resources provide useful commentary and context.

The first part of this analysis describes the operational environment by utilizing a systems perspective analysis through PMESII to better understand India's maritime security posture. This part focuses on the India-U.S. bilateral relationship and Chinese objectives in the IOR. This analysis focuses on the maritime security concerns of these

three main powers in the IOR. It does not address the interests of other stakeholders in the region, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan.

The second part of the analysis identifies gaps in Indian maritime security related to U.S. interests. JP 5-0 states, “defining the problem is essential to addressing the problem.”<sup>154</sup> This thesis uses the term *gaps* to identify what the JP 5-0 refers to as “problems.” To identify these gaps, this thesis will examine U.S. strategy and policy objectives in the IOR and compare them to the current state of India’s maritime security. As this analysis seeks to recommend U.S. action to assist India, the identified gaps will be those that can be solved through foreign assistance. Gaps will be identified through the DIME framework.

The third part of the analysis will examine U.S. interests in strengthening India’s maritime security within the context of the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. This section will identify American objectives or ends regarding India’s maritime security to promote U.S. interests in the IOR through the lens of DIME. This analysis also provides the basis for recommended U.S. actions outlined in the fourth section. While the focus of this study is on maritime security, some factors pertaining to the broader strategic context of U.S.-India relations may be included. This part of the analysis continues to play a significant role in defining and analyzing both the strategic and operational environments.

The fourth part provides recommended solutions to improve India’s maritime security in support of national objectives. The recommended ways of this study will be

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<sup>154</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS), Joint Publication (JP) 5-0, *Joint Planning* (Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, December 1, 2020), IV-11.

analyzed within the framework of DIME to give clarity to U.S. policymakers on how to improve India's maritime security with respect to China. This section will also provide the fundamental basis for answering the primary and secondary research questions.

The fifth part of this analysis examines U.S. capabilities for implementing the recommended solutions found in the fourth section. U.S. capabilities and resources will be organized within the framework of DIME. This will allow U.S. policymakers to better understand how they can improve India's maritime security in support of American interests across the elements of national power. This section is not meant to be an all-encompassing list of U.S. capabilities that can impact the IOR. It is merely a list of some of the major elements of national power available for the U.S. to ensure the recommended solutions can be implemented effectively and efficiently.

The sixth part of the analysis will determine whether the recommended solutions found in part four are suitable, feasible, and acceptable for American and Indian policymakers. This section will also determine if the proposed solutions effectively promote U.S. interests, can be accomplished with available resources, and can balance cost and risk with the advantage gained from each option.

Finally, this study will answer both the primary and secondary research questions. This part of the analysis will summarize how U.S. policymakers should approach India's maritime security to deter Chinese aggression with the IOR.

### Summary

A systems perspective utilizing PMESII and DIME are effective lenses to analyze the increasingly important U.S.-India bilateral relationship. The U.S. Army War College's Strategy Model provides a clear and comprehensive approach to analyze the

ends, ways, and means of U.S. strategy toward India's maritime security in the IOR. The methodical approach in this thesis presents a picture of how India perceives its maritime security policies, examines U.S. interests in the IOR, identifies gaps in U.S. policy to support India's maritime security, analyzes U.S. capabilities, and offers solutions for U.S. policy makers to advance national objectives. This thesis provides a thorough understanding of how the U.S. can advance its national interests through cooperation with India to create a more secure and open Indo-Pacific, despite increased Chinese assertiveness.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

Chapter 4 contains the majority of the analysis in this thesis and consists of seven sections. The first section relies on a systems perspective using PMESII to understand the strategic environment of the IOR. This section will primarily focus on the U.S.-India bilateral partnership. While the operational variables of PMESII separate the analysis, it is important to note that each variable is interrelated when describing the strategic environment. The second section identifies gaps in India's maritime security. The third section identifies U.S. objectives or ends in the IOR using the framework of DIME. This section will analyze a recommended set of objectives for U.S. policymakers with respect to India's maritime security and China. The fourth section will identify recommended solutions or ways for maritime security cooperation using the DIME framework. The fifth section identifies available U.S. resources or means to implement the recommended solutions of this study. The sixth section will analyze the feasibility, acceptability, and suitability of this study's recommended solutions, along with an assessment of risk. Finally, Chapter 4 will answer both the study's secondary and primary research questions.

#### Section 1: Systems Perspective – PMESII

##### Political

According to numerous American foreign policy documents, the U.S. is focused on promoting freedom of navigation, protecting trade and economic activity, and preventing external influence in the IOR from China. Overall, U.S. policymakers have

concentrated on protecting an open international system supported by strong democratic alliances and partnerships.<sup>155</sup> In his recent *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* (INSSG), U.S. President Joseph R. Biden noted that democratic nations have been challenged by authoritarian powers who seek to use disinformation to create divisions between America and its partners.<sup>156</sup> China has been highly critical of relations between India and the U.S. in order to promote its interests in the region. In the IOR, the U.S. also remains committed to promoting a favorable distribution of power, supporting free trade, and protecting shared access to trade markets within the Indo-Pacific region.<sup>157</sup> Improving India’s maritime security aligns with many of the national security objectives of the U.S. The INSSG directly describes the importance of deepening the partnership between India and the U.S. to address common challenges.<sup>158</sup> The U.S. recognizes, however, the importance of maintaining open lines of communication with Beijing to lower the risk of miscommunication.<sup>159</sup>

Though there are opportunities to improve the India-U.S. bilateral relationship, India remains opposed to being seen as a “junior” partner.<sup>160</sup> India hopes to strengthen its

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<sup>155</sup> U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 9.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>157</sup> “Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture,” 2.

<sup>158</sup> U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 10.

<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>160</sup> Blank, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: India*, IX.

diplomatic, economic, and military integration with the U.S. and other Asian countries to deter Chinese ambitions in the region.<sup>161</sup> India sees the PRC as its most significant challenger to its influence in the region and has grown increasingly worried about the relationship between China and India's political rival Pakistan.<sup>162</sup> These political tensions present an opening for greater cooperation between the U.S. and India. Though PM Modi allocated significant resources to improve India's maritime domain awareness, challenges remain. Indian policy makers face significant budget restraints while the Indian political bureaucracy is often slow in its decision making.<sup>163</sup> Policies that address India's security issues are often decided ad hoc as opposed to a comprehensive whole of government approach.<sup>164</sup> Though India's Act East Policy has placed greater emphasis on security issues of the IOR, India must continue to find ways to build relationships with countries that are also concerned with China's assertiveness in the maritime domain.

China's principal interest in the IOR is using its power and influence to protect its trade and sea lines of communication (SLOC). This is extremely important in preserving China's energy imports as over eighty percent of their imported oil comes through the Strait of Malacca.<sup>165</sup> The PRC has also attempted to improve its diplomatic relations with

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<sup>161</sup> Jaishankar, *Acting East: India in the Indo-Pacific*, 6.

<sup>162</sup> Blank, *Regional Responses to U.S.-China Competition in the Indo-Pacific: India*, IX.

<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>164</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>165</sup> Steven Stashwick, "China's Security Gambit in the Indian Ocean." *The Diplomat*, May 11, 2018, <https://thediploma.com/2018/05/chinas-security-gambit-in-the-indian-ocean/>.

South and Southeast Asian countries through trade and investment. These countries still retain longstanding cultural and historical linkages with China, leaving potential for future cooperation.<sup>166</sup> China will most likely attempt to use its influence to challenge the India-U.S. bilateral relationship and other partnerships in the IOR to avoid political isolation. Due to the economic integration and entanglement between China, the U.S. and India, the effectiveness of diplomatic agreements to curb Chinese aggression remains questionable. Strong political moves to counter China's influence run the risk of escalating economic and military tensions in the region.<sup>167</sup>

### Military

The U.S.-India defense relationship plays a significant role in maritime security and the overall operational environment of the IOR. The U.S. remains committed to maintaining a combat-credible military force capable of protecting U.S. interests while assuring allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific.<sup>168</sup> U.S. Indo-Pacific Command maintains a robust presence across the region through forward-based joint rotational forces.<sup>169</sup> To promote domain awareness, the Pacific Defense Initiative (PDI) for FY 21 authorized \$2

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<sup>166</sup> Teshu Singh, "China & Southeast Asia: The Strategy behind the Maritime Silk Road," in *The Maritime Great Game: India, China, US & the Indian Ocean* (New Delhi, India: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2014), 9, [http://www.ipcs.org/issue\\_select.php?recNo=547](http://www.ipcs.org/issue_select.php?recNo=547)

<sup>167</sup> H.D.P. Envall, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Towards an Indo-Pacific Order," *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies* (September 1, 2019): 7, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep20011.7>.

<sup>168</sup> "Statement of John C. Aquilino on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," 14.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*

million for partial funding of fusion centers.<sup>170</sup> These efforts have significantly increased the trust and interoperability between U.S. and Indian naval forces. India has also increased its acquisition of U.S. defense equipment through foreign military sales to include P8, E130J, and C-17 aircraft, AH-64 helicopters, and M777 howitzers.<sup>171</sup>

This military relationship between the U.S. and India has grown significantly over the past decade, with both countries placing a renewed emphasis on integration and cooperation due to a more aggressive China. In 2016, the U.S. and India signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEOMA). This agreement designated the use of military facilities for both the U.S. and India to conduct refueling operations, participate in joint exercises, and facilitate future training.<sup>172</sup> It did not, however, establish any formal basing or basing arrangements. The agreement also did not establish an obligation for either country to carry out specific joint activities.<sup>173</sup> The defense partnership between the U.S. and India has also remained strong due to a series of formal talks on security cooperation. In 2020, defense officials of India and the U.S. conducted their third “2+2” talks, where both sides affirmed their commitment to pursue continued naval integration and greater participation in exercises and conferences.<sup>174</sup> The two

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<sup>170</sup> “Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture,” 10.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>172</sup> Muneer, “Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement,” 4.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> Government of India, “Joint Statement on the Third India-U.S. 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue,” (Ministry of External Affairs, New Delhi, October 27, 2020),

countries also agreed to enhance maritime domain awareness and increase information sharing between the different services of each nation.<sup>175</sup>

While there is great potential for improving the military relationship between the U.S. and India, the partnership faces several challenges. Recent international incidents have run the risk of negatively impacting future military cooperation and security activities. In April of 2021, the USS *John Paul Jones* conducted unilateral U.S. Freedom of Navigation operations in India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).<sup>176</sup> This operation sought to challenge India's "excessive maritime claims" of more than 1.37 million square miles along its coast.<sup>177</sup> While the U.S. has conducted similar operations to defend freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific, this event infuriated Indian politicians, straining the bilateral relationship. India also became one of the harshest critics of America's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan in August 2021. India believed that America had shown its unreliability as a security partner.<sup>178</sup> Additionally, India must

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[https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33145/Joint\\_Statement\\_on\\_the\\_third\\_IndiaUS\\_2432\\_Ministerial\\_Dialogue](https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/33145/Joint_Statement_on_the_third_IndiaUS_2432_Ministerial_Dialogue)

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Sreemoy Talukdar, "US FONOP in India's EEZ: Storm in a Teacup, but Issue Highlights Residual Baggage of Cold War Era," *First Post*, April 12, 2021, <https://www.firstpost.com/india/us-fonop-in-indias-eez-storm-in-a-teacup-but-issue-highlights-residual-baggage-of-cold-war-era-9519091.html>.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> Sameer Lalwani and Tyler Sagerstrom, "Avoiding a Collision Course with India," *War on the Rocks*, September 12, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/09/avoiding-a-collision-course-with-india/>.

again deal with a Taliban government whose interests align more with Pakistan and China.<sup>179</sup>

During the recent Russian-Ukrainian War, the U.S. has also considered placing sanctions on India under the “Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act.”<sup>180</sup> India would be the subject of these economic sanctions because of their purchase of Russian S-400 systems.<sup>181</sup> India has engaged in several agreements to purchase military hardware from different countries as part of its non-alignment policy.<sup>182</sup> U.S. sanctions may weaken the defense partnership, directly impacting efforts to curb Chinese ambitions.

Though China remains focused on protecting its vital interests in the Western Pacific, the PRC continues to improve its military capabilities to protect strategic interests globally. In the 2015 Military Strategy White paper on China’s new policy of “active defense,” the PLN has sought to “gradually shift its focus from “offshore waters defense” to a combination of “offshore waters defense” with “open seas protection.”<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> ET Online, “CAATSA: What Is It, Why It Is In News & How It Can Hurt India,” *Economic Times*, March 8, 2022, [https://www.google.com/amps/s/m.economictimes.com/news/defence/caatsa-what-it-is-why-it-is-in-news-how-it-can-hurt-india/amp\\_articleshow/89986708.cms](https://www.google.com/amps/s/m.economictimes.com/news/defence/caatsa-what-it-is-why-it-is-in-news-how-it-can-hurt-india/amp_articleshow/89986708.cms)

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Stashwick, “China’s Security Gambit in the Indian Ocean.”

<sup>183</sup> The State Council Information Office of the People’s Republic of China, “China’s Military Strategy,” (Chinese Ministry of National Defense, May 26, 2015), [news.usni.org/2015/05/26/document-Chinas-military-strategy](http://news.usni.org/2015/05/26/document-Chinas-military-strategy).

China has also sought to build an effective and multifunctional marine combat force.<sup>184</sup> Tripling in size over the last two decades, the PRC Navy has also incorporated new systems such as the RENHAI guided-missile cruiser and the LUYANG III MOD guided-missile destroyer.<sup>185</sup> These systems provide the Chinese Navy greater maneuverability and flexibility to execute littoral and blue water mission sets.<sup>186</sup> The PRC has also increased its military spending to rapidly modernize its military across all domains.<sup>187</sup> China's 2021 defense budget saw an increase of 6.8% or \$209.16 billion from 2020.<sup>188</sup> These military modernization efforts have emboldened China to willingly accept hostilities with other great powers to meet political and economic goals.<sup>189</sup> Though China has an invested interest in protecting its maritime trade routes in the IOR, questions remain on whether it can do so militarily based on its current resources and appetite for such operations. The Chinese military is likely to remain focused on two main efforts: the South China Sea and the reunification with Taiwan. Based on China's current force

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," 32.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>188</sup> Matthew P. Funaiolo and Brian Hart, "Understanding China's 2021 Defense Budget," Center for Strategic and International Studies, March 5, 2021, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/understanding-Chinas-2021-defense-budget>.

<sup>189</sup> "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," 31.

structure, it is unlikely that the PRC will be able to field a two-ocean blue water navy capable of heavily influencing the IOR.<sup>190</sup>

### Economic

The U.S. *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance* cites the importance of expanding America’s economic prosperity and rebuilding American supply chains.<sup>191</sup>

Economic security is synonymous with national security in the view of U.S.

policymakers.<sup>192</sup> In the IOR, the U.S. has primarily focused on maintaining open sea lines

of communication to support international commerce. This includes protecting trade routes through key choke points such as the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea.

Any disruptions to the East-West energy trade through the Indian Ocean would have a

destabilizing effect on not only Asia but the entire global economy.<sup>193</sup> In the 2022 White

House US-Indo-Pacific strategy document, the U.S. has promised to promote an

economic framework that helps developing economies transition to the digital

economy.<sup>194</sup> India’s rapid economic growth has drawn the attention of numerous

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<sup>190</sup> Colley, “A Future Chinese Indian Ocean Fleet?”

<sup>191</sup> U.S. President, *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, 9.

<sup>192</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>193</sup> Michael J. Green and Andrew Shearer, “Defining U.S. Indian Ocean Strategy,” *The Washington Quarterly* (Spring 2012): 177, [ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/twq/v35i2/f\\_0024731\\_20190.pdf](https://ciaotest.cc.columbia.edu/journals/twq/v35i2/f_0024731_20190.pdf).

<sup>194</sup> U.S. President, *Indo-Pacific Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2022), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>.

American Corporations who have already created a large investment lobbying firm in Washington, DC.<sup>195</sup>

India's maritime economy includes a wide range of economic activities, including ports, coastal infrastructure, fishing, maritime trade, and offshore energy mining.<sup>196</sup> Improvements to India's maritime security capabilities will allow the country to pursue economic expansion and continued integration into the global economy. With over 80% of their crude oil coming from the sea, and 11% of offshore energy coming from areas in India's declared EEZ, maritime security will continue to be a focal point of Indian foreign policy.<sup>197</sup>

The U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic statement in 2015 cites the India-U.S. partnership as an "important driver of regional and global growth."<sup>198</sup> Over the past decade, economic integration between both countries has grown significantly. Bilateral trade between the U.S. and India surpassed \$149 billion in 2019.<sup>199</sup> There has also been a significant increase in weapons sales and procurement between the two countries. The

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<sup>195</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, "India and the United States: Economic, Strategic, and Maritime Implications," (Brookings Institution, Washington, DC, November 7, 2006), <https://www.brookings.edu/research/india-and-the-united-states-economic-strategic-and-maritime-implications/>.

<sup>196</sup> Sanjay J. Singh, Naval Strategic Publication 1.2, *Enduring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy: Indian Navy* (Sivakasi: Pvt. Ltd. (Standard Press India), October 2015), 24, [https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_25Jan16.pdf](https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf).

<sup>197</sup> Ibid.

<sup>198</sup> U.S. President, *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region*.

<sup>199</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "U.S. Relations with India."

U.S. Political Military Affairs Bureau has greatly assisted the advancement of the defense trade relationship, with the total defense trade between India and the U.S. increasing from \$0 in 2008 to \$20 billion in 2020.<sup>200</sup> Foreign military sales and direct commercial sales also provide for thousands of jobs in both countries.<sup>201</sup>

China continues to bolster its economic influence in the region while securing long-term energy supplies through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Maritime Silk Road. China maintains these projects are meant only to boost economic integration and investment. Others see China's initiatives as a way for the PRC to expand its power throughout the region when the U.S. has not put forward a competing and cohesive economic vision.<sup>202</sup> There is, however, significant opposition from countries in the IOR who have taken on high levels of debt to accommodate Chinese infrastructure projects.<sup>203</sup> Energy security also remains a pressing concern for Chinese policymakers. Currently, China imports over 95% of its energy imports by sea, with over 80% of this supply coming by way of the Strait of Malacca.<sup>204</sup> China is attempting to offset some of this reliance by improving its relationship with regional partners such as Myanmar.<sup>205</sup> Moving

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Chatzky and McBride, "China's Massive Belt and Road Initiative."

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Neslihan Topcu, "A Relationship on a Pipeline: China and Myanmar," *China Research Center* 19, no. 3 (October 12, 2020), [https://www.chinacenter.net/2020/china\\_currents/19-3/a-relationship-on-a-pipeline-china-and-myanmar/](https://www.chinacenter.net/2020/china_currents/19-3/a-relationship-on-a-pipeline-china-and-myanmar/).

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

energy supplies through the Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal to land pipelines in Asia could reduce transport time by almost a week and help avoid future confrontations with the U.S. Navy.<sup>206</sup> Despite this cooperation and their large investment in the IOR, China's efforts to build overland pipelines are unlikely to solve its Malacca Dilemma or meet the demand of its current energy requirements.<sup>207</sup>

### Social

The geography of the Indian Ocean is extremely important to Indian society and provides much of the region's food, livelihood, and way of life. The littorals of the IOR are also one of the world's fastest-growing and densely populated regions with about 2 billion people.<sup>208</sup> The region faces many challenges, including numerous transnational threats such as natural disasters, terrorism, piracy, smuggling, and climate change.<sup>209</sup> The warming of the Indian Ocean has also led to a higher frequency and duration of heat waves, contributing to poor work conditions for the local population.<sup>210</sup> These transnational issues will continue to require greater commitment and cooperation among

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<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Stashwick, "China's Security Gambit in the Indian Ocean."

<sup>208</sup> Dhruva Jaishankar, "Indian Ocean Region: A Pivot for India's Growth," The Brookings Institution, September 12, 2016, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.brookings.edu/opinion/indian-ocean-region-a-pivot-for-indias-growth/amp/>.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

<sup>210</sup> Nagraj Adve, "The Social Consequences of India's Heat Waves Spell Doom for the Working Poor," *The Wire*, June 11, 2019, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.thewire.in/article/environment/the-social-consequences-of-indias-heat-waves-spell-doom-for-the-working-poor/amp/>.

stakeholders in the region.<sup>211</sup> Due to the reliance on the Indian Ocean for food and trade, maritime concerns often dominate political discussion and economic policy.<sup>212</sup> These social factors contribute to the overall focus placed by regional governments on maritime security.

### Information

The U.S. and India have made significant progress in improving information sharing in the maritime domain. In 2018, both countries signed the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA).<sup>213</sup> This agreement enhanced information sharing and interoperability between the militaries of both countries.<sup>214</sup> In October 2020, the U.S. and India also penned the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which allowed for the sharing of unclassified geospatial information between both navies.<sup>215</sup> The ability to share topographic data such as maps and nautical charts, including avionics to India's U.S.-supplied aircraft, has significantly boosted India's maritime domain awareness in the region.<sup>216</sup> Greater information sharing is vital

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid.

<sup>212</sup> Jaishankar, "Indian Ocean Region."

<sup>213</sup> "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," 13.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

<sup>216</sup> Pia Krishnankutty, "All About Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, Which India and US Are All Set to Sign," *The Print*, October 26, 2020, <https://theprint.in/theprint-essential/all-about-basic-exchange-and-cooperation-agreement-which-india-and-us-are-all-set-to-sign/530883/>.

in tracking and ensuring that key SLOCs such as the Straits of Malacca remain open for trade. The U.S. has also strongly supported India's creation of an information fusion center that focuses exclusively on maritime domain awareness.<sup>217</sup>

### Infrastructure

The modernization and investment in maritime infrastructure will play a significant role in India's ability to promote economic prosperity and freedom of navigation in the region. India utilizes twelve major and over two hundred non-major ports along its coasts to support maritime trade.<sup>218</sup> In the 2015 *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision*, both countries called for greater investment in "infrastructure connectivity that links South and Southeast Asia to enhance energy transmission and encourage free trade."<sup>219</sup> India has continually faced operational challenges as demand for its goods and services has increased. India's operational capacity lags far behind the global average, while the locations of most of its industrial centers are far from the coasts.<sup>220</sup>

To address this issue, India has created several infrastructure development initiatives, such as the Sagarmala Project in 2015. This project seeks to reduce logistics

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<sup>217</sup> "Statement of Admiral Philip S. Davidson on U.S. Indo-Pacific Command Posture," 14.

<sup>218</sup> Singh, Naval Strategic Publication 1.2, 27.

<sup>219</sup> U.S. President, *U.S.-Indian Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region*.

<sup>220</sup> N. Chandrasekaran and S. Mohan, Kumar, "A White Paper on Seaport: Challenges and Issues in India," (CII Institute of Logistics, Tamil Nadu, India), accessed April 3, 2022, [https://sourcing.essar.com/GS/Portals/0/Download/India\\_Seaport\\_Issues\\_and\\_Challenges.pdf](https://sourcing.essar.com/GS/Portals/0/Download/India_Seaport_Issues_and_Challenges.pdf).

costs by developing potentially navigable waterways along the coastline.<sup>221</sup> India projects that Sagarmala will eventually boost the nation's GDP by 2%.<sup>222</sup> In March 2021, India announced an additional, long-term plan to invest \$82 billion toward modernizing its seaports.<sup>223</sup> Prime Minister Modi called on public and private investments to support this effort.<sup>224</sup> This may provide an opportunity for the U.S. to directly contribute to the development of India's maritime infrastructure while strengthening America's position as an alternative driver of economic investment to China.

## Section 2: India's Maritime Security Gaps and China

In reaction to China's more assertive foreign policy in the IOR, India has focused its maritime policy on promoting freedom of navigation, protecting its trade routes and sea lines of communication, and deterring foreign presence within their perceived zone of influence. Maritime commerce plays a significant role in the Indian economy, with merchandise trade making up over 35% of India's GDP.<sup>225</sup> Ninety-five percent of this

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<sup>221</sup> Government of India, "Sargamala," Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://shipmin.gov.in/division/sagarmala>.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> "India Announces \$82B Port Infrastructure Plan," The Maritime Executive, March 2, 2021, <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/india-announces-82b-port-infrastructure-plan>.

<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Pradeep Chauhan, "Physical Protection of India's Critical Maritime Infrastructure Part 3: Maritime Transport: Shipping," *National Maritime Foundation*, February 14, 2020, accessed April 3, 2022, <https://maritimeindia.org/physical-protection-of-indias-critical-maritime-infrastructure-part-3-maritime-transportation-shipping/>.

trade by volume is moved by sea.<sup>226</sup> The rapid expansion of their economy has prompted Indian policymakers to reexamine their maritime security posture. Unfortunately, the bureaucracy within the Indian government has been slow to react to growing maritime challenges. India continues to face major shortcomings in maritime security policy due to their maritime infrastructure, the lack of military investment in the Indian Navy, and aversion to entering firm maritime security agreements because of its foreign policy of strategic autonomy.

The lack of fully developed maritime infrastructure presents the most challenging gap in India's maritime security posture. Improvements to sea exploration, natural gas extraction, and rare earth mineral mining have led to an increased demand for efficient ports and shipping.<sup>227</sup> While this has increased container traffic by 15% annually over the last five years, India's ports have not met the increased demand due to congestion and low productivity.<sup>228</sup> This has made it difficult for India to fully realize its economic potential to better compete with China. India has also struggled to protect its merchant ships from a wide variety of hazards in the IOR. While outside the scope of this study, Indian shipping faces various threats such as natural disasters, crime, and piracy.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

<sup>227</sup> Sureesh Mehta, *About the Book-Maritime Infrastructure in India: Challenges and Prospects* (New Delhi: Studera Press, 2018), <http://www.studerapress.com/product/maritime-infrastructure-india-challenges-prospects/>.

<sup>228</sup> Chandrasekaran and Kumar, "A White Paper on Seaport."

<sup>229</sup> Pradeep Chauhan, "Physical Protection of India's Critical Maritime Infrastructure Part 3: Maritime Transport: Shipping," National Maritime Foundation, February 14, 2020, <https://maritimeindia.org/physical-protection-of-indias-critical-maritime-infrastructure-part-3-maritime-transportation-shipping/>.

Unfortunately, Sino-Indian competition can adversely impact future cooperation in dealing with these transnational threats in the future.

India has also failed to appropriate the necessary funding to boost its blue water naval capabilities to effectively compete with a resurgent China. While publicly acknowledging the importance of its role in the maritime domain within the IOR, India spends far less proportionally than its peers.<sup>230</sup> In FY17-18, India spent only 15% of its total military budget on its Navy. This was in sharp contrast to partner nations like the U.S. and Japan, who spent 30% and 25%, respectively.<sup>231</sup> India's lack of funding has also led to delays in building their new Vikrant-Class aircraft carrier and modernizing the submarine fleet.<sup>232</sup> Additionally, India has failed to effectively field a combined services command that can integrate assets to boost maritime security.<sup>233</sup>

India's aversion to entering polarizing diplomatic, economic, and military agreements has hindered its ability to improve maritime security. Following their independence in 1947, India embraced a policy of non-alignment to avoid being pulled into the politics of the Cold War and because of U.S. support for Pakistan.<sup>234</sup> In the 21st

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<sup>230</sup> Aman Thakker, "A Rising India in the Indian Ocean Needs a Strong Navy," Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 17, 2018, <https://www.csis.org/npfp/rising-india-indian-ocean-needs-strong-navy>.

<sup>231</sup> Ibid.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Rajen, Harshe, "India's Non-Alignment: An Attempt at Conceptual Reconstruction," *Economic and Political Weekly* 25, no. 7/8 (February 17-24, 1990): 399, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4395968>.

century, however, cooperation between the U.S. and India increased significantly. In 2005, both countries signed a ten-year defense pact and civil nuclear energy deal.<sup>235</sup> In 2013, India formally moved away from non-alignment in favor of a policy of strategic autonomy.<sup>236</sup>

Not wanting to align ideologically with any one country, India now focuses its efforts on forming partnerships based on specific issues.<sup>237</sup> While maritime security presents an opportunity for Indian-U.S. cooperation, remnants of their nonalignment still exist. India must balance its significant economic and political ties with China when working with Western states to curb Chinese influence. Though the U.S. appears to be a natural partner to work with on maritime security, there remain disagreements on several issues. The U.S. seeks to challenge what it calls India's "expansive EEZ" by conducting frequent FON operations in their declared territorial waters.<sup>238</sup> Contrary to international law, India has demanded consent for all foreign military exercises or maneuvers in its EEZ.<sup>239</sup> This position, however, is incompatible with U.S. interests in protecting the principle of FON. Despite U.S. pressure, India has also shown a willingness to maintain diplomatic and economic relations with America's adversaries, such as Russia. In the

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<sup>235</sup> Jeff M. Smith, "Strategic Autonomy and U.S.-Indian Relations," *War on the Rocks*, November 6, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/11/strategic-autonomy-and-u-s-indian-relations/>.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>238</sup> Talukdar, "US FONOP in India's EEZ."

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*

realm of maritime security, it is unlikely that India and the U.S. will develop a comprehensive framework that formally aligns them against China.

### Section 3: U.S. Objectives in the IOR

Based on the analysis of the operational environment, this study will identify U.S. objectives or ends for the IOR. This section has identified major objectives that can be achieved through the lens of each instrument of national power. Diplomatically, the U.S. should seek to modernize its partnership with India involving maritime security while also developing a system for settling major maritime disputes between India, the U.S., and China. For information, the U.S. should seek to improve both its maritime domain awareness through increased information sharing and improved integration with India. For the military instrument of national power, the U.S. must be able to provide a credible combat force posture to deter Chinese aggression and maintain a persistent military presence to support India's maritime security. This can be accomplished through forward based and joint rotational forces. Economically, the U.S. must ensure a stable maritime order by protecting free trade and the freedom of navigation. The U.S. must also counteract China's economic influence by expanding its trade ties with India and the ASEAN nations.

### Section 4: Recommended Solutions across U.S. Instruments of National Power

To bolster India's maritime security, the U.S. must leverage existing political agreements to counter Chinese aggression in the IOR. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, consisting of Japan, Australia, the U.S., and India, provides an opportunity for cooperation between allies and partners to address China's increasingly assertive foreign

policy.<sup>240</sup> One area where the dialogue may prove effective is the promotion of joint training exercises. Military exercises like Malabar could be strengthened by incorporating other partners in the region. While these efforts run the risk of triggering aggression and condemnation from China, future dialogue can avoid open hostilities by placing focus on the enforcement of international norms in the IOR.<sup>241</sup> The U.S. must also leverage existing economic relationships between India and the ASEAN countries. Economic forums such as the East Asia Summit provide an excellent place for all stakeholders to discuss bilateral and multilateral issues such as freedom of navigation and maritime domain awareness.

There are also opportunities for India and the U.S. to improve intelligence and information sharing in the maritime domain. By sharing its intelligence on threats in the IOR, the U.S. could better articulate its concerns with the rise of a resurgent China. The U.S. should also establish an information and intelligence sharing node at USPACOM that focuses on maritime security and the Chinese threat in the IOR.

The U.S. can also continue to improve its defense relationship with India by increasing its foreign military sales of advanced technology. Intelligence platforms such as Global Hawk and JSTARS would greatly improve India's ability to monitor the IOR. These systems also present additional opportunities for the U.S. to work directly with the Indian military during exercises. However, future military cooperation does not need to be singularly focused on naval operations. Training exercises between the U.S. Marine

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<sup>240</sup> Green and Shearer, "Defining U.S. Indian Ocean Strategy," 185.

<sup>241</sup> Envall, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue," 7.

Corps, U.S. Air Force, and their Indian counterparts in the littoral regions of the IOR would greatly improve military capabilities in the maritime domain. U.S. military and political leaders could look to present a message of integration instead of interoperability. India is unlikely to give up on the procurement of weapons from other countries due to its policy of strategic autonomy. This includes adversaries of the U.S., such as Russia and China. A focus on Indian-U.S. integration would still help the Indian military increase its capabilities in the maritime domain while allowing the U.S. to boost overall foreign military sales.

Economically, the U.S. should promote public and private investments in India's maritime infrastructure. This would allow India to boost the output of its maritime economy, setting conditions for continued economic integration between the U.S. and India in the future. This may also lead India to rely more on the U.S. as an economic partner than China. Additionally, the U.S. can provide logistical expertise and consultation to increase the efficiency of India's ports and shipping industry.

Energy security will also remain a significant interest of Indian policymakers. In 2018, the U.S. and India presented an energy partnership joint statement, recognizing energy's importance to the Indian-U.S. bilateral relationship. This document focused on four major pillars: power and energy efficiency, oil and gas, renewable energy, and sustainable growth to help strengthen India's power grid.<sup>242</sup> As the world's top producer

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<sup>242</sup> Donald J. Trump and Narendra Modi, "U.S.-India Strategy Energy Partnership Joint Statement," (Joint Statement, July 17, 2020), [https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/07/f76/US-India%20SEP%20Joint%20Statement\\_Issued%20July%2017%202020.pdf](https://www.energy.gov/sites/prod/files/2020/07/f76/US-India%20SEP%20Joint%20Statement_Issued%20July%2017%202020.pdf).

of crude oil, the U.S. can greatly assist India in meeting its energy requirements.<sup>243</sup> In 2021, India did overtake China as America's largest importer of oil.<sup>244</sup> This partnership is reciprocal, with India exporting about \$3 billion worth of diesel and refined petroleum to the U.S. annually.<sup>245</sup> Though it will most likely depend on American domestic politics at the time, U.S. policymakers should look to balance policies of addressing climate change with bolstering a strategic partnership with India.

#### Section 5: U.S. Capabilities and Resources to Promote U.S. Interests in the IOR

Diplomatically, the U.S. Department of State is tasked with engaging and bolstering the bilateral relationship with India. This open dialogue plays an important role in strengthening the region's political, economic, and military partnerships. Currently, the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs within the State Department manages the relationship with India and the other countries of South Asia.<sup>246</sup> American diplomats can work directly with their counterparts at different bureaus across Asia. To maintain and improve diplomatic relations with India, U.S. foreign service personnel from different

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<sup>243</sup> U.S. Energy Information Administration, "What Countries Are the Top Producers and Consumers of Oil," 2022, <https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=709&t=6>.

<sup>244</sup> Hari Seshasayee, "Oil: A New Chapter in U.S.-India Relations," Wilson Center, February 10, 2022, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/oil-new-chapter-us-india-relations>.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid.

<sup>246</sup> Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, "Key Topics – Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs," U.S. Department of State, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/key-topics-bureau-of-south-and-central-asian-affairs/>.

geographic areas in the Indo-Pacific must work together to ensure strategies are mutually supportive to best strengthen India's maritime security.

The ability to collect, share, and analyze information remains a key capability for the U.S. Military intelligence and reconnaissance platforms like Global Hawk and JSTARs greatly enable maritime domain awareness. The U.S. also has the required resources to establish permanent information fusion centers to share information more effectively between India and the U.S.

Within the military instrument of national power, the U.S. fields the world's most powerful force, capable of projecting combat power globally and across all domains. This gives U.S. policymakers an important tool for deterrence in the IOR. The ability to conduct FON operations helps protect U.S. economic interests, while security cooperation activities provide an excellent opportunity to strengthen the U.S.-India bilateral relationship.

The U.S. also has the funding to significantly invest in India's economy and maritime infrastructure. With the identification of INDO-PACOM as the priority theater, American policymakers should focus both public and private funding on joint and multinational exercises and investments in India's maritime security. The U.S. also has a wealth of logistical expertise within its armed forces and civilian work force. The U.S. can utilize civilian contractors and military logisticians to assist India in improving its maritime operations.

## Section 6: Feasibility, Acceptability, Suitability, and Risk of Proposed Solutions

### Feasibility

As discussed in Chapter 3, this study determined the feasibility of the above recommended solutions based on whether the policy options can be accomplished with America's available resources. This analysis will focus on whether the policy options can be implemented in a time frame of one to three years. America has the necessary resources to significantly boost the India-U.S. bilateral relationship. While diplomatic efforts to leverage arrangements such as the Quad may take longer due to disparate concerns of the countries involved, the U.S. can still bring maritime security to the forefront of discussions.

In order, however, to be seen as a credible partner against Chinese ambitions in the IOR, the U.S. must provide concrete military and economic assistance to India. This support can help deter China from challenging India's economic interests and prevent the PRC from building up a large naval presence in the IOR. In the near term, USINDOPACOM has the resources to establish nodes to promote information sharing and the funding to increase the frequency and intensity of multinational exercises. The U.S. can also increase energy exports to India while incentivizing private corporations to invest in India's maritime infrastructure.

### Acceptability

This analysis determined whether the recommended solutions are acceptable based on whether the policies provide a benefit to the U.S. that is worth the cost. These recommended policies provide an important benefit that ensures America's national security. As focus has shifted to the Indo-Pacific, this study's recommendations help

protect America's vital national interest of economic prosperity. Investment in India's maritime infrastructure and operational readiness allows the U.S. to reassign its finite resources to other areas of concern, such as the Western Pacific. Failing to proactively engage with India as a primary security partner in the IOR gives China the opportunity to extend its economic and military influence unchallenged. While these recommendations require significant American resources, the benefit of protecting key international trade routes is worth the cost.

### Suitability

This analysis examined whether the proposed policy options will attain U.S. policy objectives with respect to Chinese aggression in the IOR. These recommended policies can be reasonably expected to improve India's maritime security. Engagement across the instruments of national power can provide India with the tools necessary to deter potential militarization of the IOR. However, the policy recommendations put forward in this study still allow for cooperation on issues of mutual interests between the U.S., India, and China. This future cooperation could protect free and open maritime trade, increase maritime domain awareness to combat piracy and illegal fishing, and address climate change.

### Risks to the U.S.

The recommendations of this study risk causing greater turbulence in the IOR if China believes its vital interests are threatened. This would include any action that disrupts trade through the Strait of Malacca. The current war in Ukraine also runs the risk of pushing India closer to China and Russia. The U.S. must be careful in implementing

any future sanctions on India to not permanently harm the Indian- U.S. bilateral relationship. The IOR is also full of fragile and failing states. Miscalculations and intervention in regional conflicts could threaten the current maritime security framework. The littoral areas of the IOR present more of a risk for hostilities than open conflict in the Indian Ocean.

There are also risks in leveraging agreements such as the Quad to curb Chinese ambitions in the IOR. The quad has so far been ineffective in curbing the PRC's influence in the IOR due to the economic and political ties between India and China. There also remains distrust between India and Australia due to the latter's decision to abandon the original quadrilateral dialogue in 2008.<sup>247</sup> India may decide it is in its long-term best interest to avoid confrontation and remain non-aligned when addressing China directly.

Though outside the scope of this study, strengthening the India-U.S. bilateral relationship could stress America's relationship with other countries in the region, such as Pakistan. The U.S. has relied on Pakistan as a partner in the war on terror, despite its tense relationship with India. With focus shifting to the Indo-Pacific and great power competition, U.S. policymakers must not lose sight of maintaining key relationships to combat terrorist activity in the Middle East.

As described in Chapter 3, risk in the IOR could also increase if U.S. policymakers do not take a coordinated, whole of government approach to addressing India's maritime security in the IOR. Military actions, such as FON operations, run the

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<sup>247</sup> Envall, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue," 7.

risk of hurting both diplomatic and economic arrangements between the two countries. The U.S. must achieve unity of effort in its approach to India's maritime security with all capabilities working in concert.

Though U.S. and Indian interests often differ over issues such as seabed exploitation and climate change, China's ambitions to influence the IOR present an opportunity for India and the U.S. to increase bilateral security cooperation.<sup>248</sup> The IOR contains several complex problems that require extensive study and analysis. Due to the ever-changing nature of the operational environment, it is unlikely the U.S. will be able to establish a clear and organized framework to address India's maritime concerns. U.S. strategy will require flexibility to mitigate the risks described above.

## Section 7: Research Question Analysis

### Secondary Research Questions

1. What are India's primary maritime security concerns with respect to China?

India's primary maritime security concerns with respect to China are maintaining freedom of navigation throughout the Indo-Pacific, protecting their maritime trade and economic prosperity, and deterring foreign presence in the IOR. While transnational threats such as terrorism, piracy, and illegal fishing impact the region, economic trade appears to be their most pressing concern. They are afraid that China will use its infrastructure and economic initiatives to encircle India and dominate the IOR. China does not, however, currently have the military capability to challenge U.S. or Indian naval power in the Indian Ocean. The projection of such forces presents clear logistical

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<sup>248</sup> Green and Shearer, "Defining U.S. Indian Ocean Strategy," 185.

issues to the PRC Navy. China is more likely to maintain a ‘harmonious sea approach’ rather than open engagement with India and the U.S. in the IOR.<sup>249</sup> India will, however, continue to challenge any Chinese effort that seeks to dictate terms within India’s perceived sphere of influence.

2. How would improvements to India’s maritime security posture support U.S. interests in South Asia?

The protection of key SLOCs for international commerce, such as the Strait of Malacca, directly supports American economic interests in the region. Improvements to India’s maritime security posture will allow greater economic and military integration in the India-U.S. bilateral relationship. This will also provide opportunities for the U.S. to assist India in supporting the development of its maritime infrastructure and meeting current energy needs. The strengthening of information sharing and logistical agreements will also allow the U.S. to maintain better maritime domain awareness and more effectively project forces in the IOR. Improved maritime security also allows the U.S. to seek alternative partnerships with India and the ASEAN countries to promote economic development and deepen integration.

Future cooperation does not, however, need to be in the form of complex and extensive trade pacts such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership, an agreement in which the U.S. eventually pulled its support. Trade pacts focused on lowering tariffs and trade barriers are likely to receive a fair amount of skepticism from the American public. The U.S. can instead look to develop a series of multilateral and bilateral trade agreements

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<sup>249</sup> Rajan, “China in the Indian Ocean,” 8.

that provide focused and transparent solutions to protect national interests. U.S. economic engagement in the region can also provide an alternative for IOR countries to the BRI and Maritime Silk Road.

3. What capabilities or options does the U.S. possess to increase maritime security cooperation with India?

The U.S. has a wide range of capabilities within the instruments of national power to increase maritime security cooperation with India. Diplomatically, the U.S. has an extensive network of treaties, partnerships, and alliances to deter Chinese aggression while protecting international trade in the IOR. These include the quadrilateral dialogue, economic agreements with ASEAN nations, and security agreements with Japan and Australia. In the information realm, the U.S. can leverage its incredible intelligence collection technologies to increase maritime domain awareness while sharing information with Indian forces. Militarily, the U.S. can increase foreign military sales to provide the best equipment to the Indian Navy. The ability to project forces anywhere in the world allows the U.S. to maintain a credible conventional deterrence force to Chinese aggression. Economically, the U.S. has the means to significantly invest in India's maritime infrastructure while providing logistical expertise to improve its port operations and shipping industry.

#### Primary Research Question

How can the U.S. best utilize the instruments of national power to improve India's maritime security in order to counter Chinese influence and aggression?

The secondary research questions helped understand the IOR's operational environment and helped create proposed solutions to advance India's maritime security in

support of U.S. interests. The primary research questions focus on the “ways” or recommendations outlined in section four of this chapter. These solutions are framed utilizing the elements of national power.

Diplomatically, the U.S. must leverage existing partnerships while navigating India’s tendency towards non-alignment. This can be done by focusing on maintaining a free and open IOR while promoting international norms. The U.S. can serve as a mediator in fixing strained relationships such as the India-Australia partnership. The U.S. must also continue to seek ways to cooperate with both India and China on transnational threats while maintaining open lines of communication to prevent misunderstandings.

In terms of information sharing, the Indian-U.S. agreements of COMCASA and BECA were excellent starting points in improving maritime domain awareness. The U.S. should attempt to establish a permanent fusion center for the IOR where the U.S. and India can share intelligence analysis and work together to develop estimates on strategic threats such as China.

To increase the combat capabilities of U.S. and Indian forces in the IOR, both countries must increase the frequency and intensity of bilateral and multilateral exercises. This includes integrating new technologies and scheduling bilateral training across all domains. Inviting other partners in the region to become permanent participants in military exercises will go a long way in improving military effectiveness. The U.S. also has an opportunity to boost its foreign military sales of intelligence platforms like the global hawk and JSTARS. It will also be important that the U.S. stresses integration in addition to interoperability to respect India’s policy of strategic autonomy. Additionally, the U.S. and India can agree to participate in joint exercises such as maritime patrols and

disaster relief to continue building naval capabilities. In the long run, this will allow the Indian Navy to field a more capable force to deter Chinese efforts to influence the region. A credible Indian Navy also allows the U.S. to reallocate resources to protect other areas of interest.

Finally, the U.S. should use the instruments of national power to protect its most vital interest, economic prosperity, and global trade. This includes ensuring a free and open Indo-Pacific, preventing conflict that can disrupt international trade in the region, and investing in India's maritime infrastructure. These actions will allow the Indian economy to better compete with the Chinese. By leveraging its economic power, the U.S. can provide India and other developing countries with alternative investment opportunities to China's BRI. It is unlikely, however, that India will completely abandon China. It will be important that U.S. policymakers execute a strategy in the IOR that fosters cooperation while still protecting vital U.S. interests from Chinese predation.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This thesis focuses on India's maritime security, its importance in deterring China's ambitions in the IOR, and America's ability to enhance the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. Using the instruments of national power, this study identified recommended solutions to improve India's maritime security to deter Chinese aggression in the IOR. This chapter will interpret the findings of chapter 4 and discuss how the recommended solutions can be implemented by U.S. policymakers.

Additionally, this chapter will identify topics for further study. These recommended areas for future research will provide U.S. policymakers with a better understanding of India's maritime security posture and how the U.S. can better advance its interests in the IOR. Finally, this chapter will discuss how the efficiency of this study could be improved to inform future research efforts.

The recommendations in Chapter 4 address India's maritime security concerns by improving the U.S.-India bilateral relationship and building American capacity in the region. For example, a few of the recommended solutions leverage existing agreements, such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and ASEAN economic partnerships. This study also recommends greater cooperation between the U.S. and India through multinational military exercises, increased economic investment in India's maritime infrastructure initiatives, and developing protocols to prevent misunderstandings with China on maritime security concerns. Combined with other recommendations in Chapter

4, these solutions contribute to a comprehensive and holistic approach to improving India's maritime security while protecting U.S. interests.

#### Interpretation of the Findings

Closer cooperation between the U.S. and India on maritime security is extremely beneficial in advancing the interests of both countries with respect to China. Implementation of these recommended solutions requires India to agree to further assistance from the U.S. India is likely to be open to the recommended proposals as long as they can maintain an overall foreign policy of strategic ambiguity. The current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, remains motivated to protect India's role in the maritime domain while curbing Chinese influence in the IOR. For the U.S., American policymakers are likely to be open to implementing the recommended solutions due to bipartisan agreement over China as the most pressing geopolitical threat to U.S. interests. Additionally, the research in this thesis suggests there are opportunities for both the U.S. and India to cooperate with China on issues of common interest. While not specifically addressed in this study, challenges such as natural disasters, climate change, and piracy are areas all three countries can work together to solve. In the future, it will be important for the U.S. to be transparent with China in its efforts to strengthen the U.S.- India bilateral relationship. This will help mitigate the risk of armed conflict in the IOR.

As U.S. policymakers transition their focus from CENTCOM to US-INDOPACOM, India should remain a primary focus area for advancing American interests. The ends, ways, and means presented in this study can assist U.S. policymakers in developing an overall grand strategy for maritime security in the IOR. The analysis in this thesis shows a clear linkage between India's maritime security and U.S. interests in

the Indo-Pacific. As a major regional power, India provides a natural counterweight to Chinese ambitions in the IOR. The U.S. should expand its bilateral relationship with India, leverage existing partnerships like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and ASEAN economic agreements, while providing greater investment in India's maritime growth.

#### Recommendations for Further Study

Freedom of navigation operations, maritime trade, and external influence in the IOR are worthy topics for further study. While this study focused on U.S. and India's interests in maritime security in the IOR, there are several other stakeholders in the region, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, that have their own set of maritime concerns. Future research should examine other maritime security situations of other countries in the IOR while seeking to understand their relationships with China. By analyzing these linkages, U.S. policymakers can better understand their impact on this study's proposed solutions.

Future research can also examine and provide a deeper analysis of India's modernization efforts for its Navy and port infrastructure. While this analysis provided general solutions through the framework of DIME, a future study could focus on India's political system and its impact on efforts to improve maritime security. This research could utilize a framework such as DOTMLPF-P to examine how India leverages its own instruments of national power to promote maritime security. This analysis could also examine how the Indian governmental bureaucracy approaches maritime security concerns while discovering ways to build efficiencies within the U.S.-India bilateral relationship. Finally, future research could examine how the Indian public perceives

efforts to improve maritime security. This research would be unique from this study as it would require additional Indian primary sources.

Maritime security across the IOR with respect to China continues to be a pressing concern for both India and the U.S. While the recommended solutions from this study apply to the India-U.S. bilateral relationship, the findings may also apply to other countries in South and Southeast Asia. Future comparative studies of America's bilateral relationships in the region may determine additional ways the U.S. can more effectively combat China's growing influence in the IOR.

### Research Process Considerations

As discussed in the delimitations in chapter 1, this research used only sources written in the English language. While there is no national language in India, Hindi has increased in popularity since its introduction as an official language in India in 1950.<sup>250</sup> English is the other official language of India and remains the dominant language in business and politics.<sup>251</sup> There are, however, several other languages spoken across India such as Braj, Bhojpuri, and Maithili.<sup>252</sup> A researcher that speaks these languages may have access to additional sources and would most likely be able to conduct a more in-depth study of the research questions. The analysis of India's maritime security also requires an understanding of politics at the provincial and local level. While this study

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<sup>250</sup> Lakhon Gusain, "The Effectiveness of Establishing Hindi as a National Language," *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs* 13, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2012): 43, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/43134213>.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*, 49.

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

utilized a variety of national documents, Indian sources from lower levels of government would provide additional context on how India approaches its maritime security issues.

### Conclusion

As U.S. policymakers shift their focus to Asia and the threat of China, the India-U.S. bilateral relationship will become increasingly important in maintaining a free and open Indo-Pacific. As a growing economic and military power in the IOR, India will continue to focus heavily on its maritime security posture. This provides an excellent opportunity for the U.S. to reassess its objectives in the IOR while strengthening its partnership with India using all of the instruments of national power. As this study has shown, a strong India-U.S. bilateral relationship has the potential to serve as an effective deterrent to Chinese influence. By implementing the recommendations in this study, the U.S. can protect its vital national interests while also strengthening other regional partnerships and alliances in the IOR.

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