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Strategic SOF partnering with India: Preventing Future Large Scale Conflict in the Asia Pacific Region

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Executive Summary

Title: Strategic SOF partnering with India: Preventing Future Large Scale Conflict in the Asia Pacific Region

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Thesis: This Masters of Military Studies monograph will prove India is the key U.S. partner nation for future security and stability in the Asia Pacific region. The monograph will prove this through three avenues. First, it will confirm India's legitimacy as the regional power to balance the growth of communist China. Secondly, this increasing relationship with India will balance the Indo-Pakistan relationship and solidify the US-Pakistan relationship. Lastly, as DOD looks for the most effective force posture, this monograph will prove India as the ideal country for increased USSOCOM partnerships for both short-term and long-term regional security and stability.

Discussion: The 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance and the National Security Strategy clearly lays out guidance directing DOD to "pivot" to the Asia Pacific region as the area with the greatest strategic threats in the future. To conduct this pivot in the current fiscally strained environment, DOD must seek a key partner nation to balance security and stability in the region. India is one of the few nations in the region with a thriving economy, increasingly strong military power, and growing regional status to partner with the United States to balance these threats. India is the largest democracy in the world, strategically located in the Indian Ocean and shares a border with China and Pakistan. India has the capacity and capability to match the growth of communist China in the Asia Pacific region. With a stronger U.S partnership with India, Pakistan will be forced to strengthen its strained relationship with the U.S., deny terrorist groups a safehaven, and strengthen the balance in the India-Pakistan relationship. Across DOD, all services will look to build bilateral relationships with India, however, U.S. Special Operations Forces serve as a cost-effective strategic multiplier to build this key relationship with India. This would be accomplish through three short-term efforts to increase Joint Combined Exercises for Training (JCETs), increase Special Operations Liaison Officers with India's SOF Forces, and maximizing the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program allowing Indian SOF members to attend U.S. SOF specific schools. These short term goals would feed into greater long-term goals of establishing an Intelligence Fusion Center for the region to monitor and combat transnational terrorist, forward stationing of small U.S. SOF elements with Indian SOF in India, and lastly creation of a Special Operations Aviation Element to allow the immediate response by SOF forces in the Asia Pacific Region.

Conclusion: As the United States "pivots" to the Asia Pacific region and looks to strengthen key partnerships, India has the key elements to provide security and stability in the Asia Pacific Region in the future. India has the Democracy to match communist China and when partnered with the U.S. the ability to force Pakistan to deny transnational terrorist organizations a safehaven. U.S Special Operations Forces provide the cost-effective measure to build this strategic relationship for short-term and long-term regional security and stability.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Over the past decade, the United States has been involved in two large scale combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan as well as fighting the Global War on Terrorism. These operations have placed a significant fiscal strain on the Department of Defense and change is imminent. As the United States conducts a responsible draw down from these two large scale operations, take steps to protect the nation's economic vitality, and protect our interests in a world of accelerating change, it faces an inflection point.¹ This inflection point is where the United States Government determines the most effective force posture for future conflicts amidst the fiscally constrained environment. This inflection point has driven the USG and Department of Defense (DOD) to plan, restructure, and begin to posture all DOD Services and Government Agencies to combat future threats to shape U.S. national interest. In the 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance it states "We will focus on broader ranges of opportunities, including the security and prosperity of the Asia Pacific region. We are joining with allies and partners from around the world to build their capacity to promote security, prosperity, and human dignity."²

In order to posture for these future challenges in this fiscally strained environment, DOD has focused its investments in critical capabilities for future success. One of these areas of focus has been in the Special Operations Forces (SOF) within United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). While USSOCOM is not one of the six Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), it is a Functional Combatant Command, and has been designated the lead agency for counterterrorism and maintains a presence across all GCCs conducting both direct and indirect approaches to solving the nation's challenges.³ Throughout the year 2012, U.S. Special Operations Forces conducted theater engagements in more than 100 countries worldwide. At the heart of this presence is the operational context and access it provides.⁴

Similar to all branches in the military service, USSOCOM must adapt to the ever-changing environment and posture SOF assets to face current and future adversaries. The greatest threats to U.S. national interest on a global scale lie within the Asia Pacific region. The Asia-Pacific Region contains seven of the ten largest economies in the world and four of the largest military forces in the world. The 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance states, “U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia, creating a mix of evolving challenges and opportunities.”⁵ Accordingly, while the U.S. military will continue to contribute to security globally, we will of necessity rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region. Our relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region.⁶

As we focus on the Asia Pacific Region, there are several countries which the US has strategic and enduring partnerships which have the capability to increase their role as a regional power with significant influence on the future security and stability in the region. India is one of these key countries with the ability to not only be a significant regional power but also a leader in global security and stability. The United States and India are building a strategic partnership that is underpinned by our shared interests, our shared values as the world’s two largest democracies, and close connections among our people.⁷ One must understand, however, that the improved U.S.-India military cooperation also does not mean a defense alliance is on the horizon. For example, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs Peter Rodman stated “India is not going to become an ally of the United States. I think India values its independence. It values its nonalignment. So I don’t think anybody should expect that India is going to collude with us. We are looking for cooperation in security matters that serves the interests of both

countries.”⁸ India’s strategic location on the Indian Ocean is central to the Global economy with a majority of the world’s trade transiting the littorals in South Asia. This Masters of Military Studies monograph will argue India is the key U.S. partner nation for future security and stability in the Asia Pacific region. First, this monograph will prove India’s legitimacy as the regional power balancing the growth of communist China. Secondly, this increasing relationship with India will balance the Indo-Pakistan relationship and solidify the US-Pakistan relationship. Lastly, as DOD looks for the most effective force posture, this monograph will prove India as the ideal country for increased USSOCOM partnerships for both short-term and long-term regional security and stability.

The United States Government (USG) and Department of Defense (DOD) first began its relations with India in 1959 with President Dwight D Eisenhower visiting India. However from the 1960s to the early 1980s, the U.S-India relationship was non-existent due to India’s alignment with the U.S.S.R. during the Cold War period. During this period both Pakistan and China were aligned with the United States and India viewed this as a direct threat to their sovereignty. In May of 1974, India surprised the world when it unexpectedly tested a nuclear device.⁹ However, it would not be until 24 years later when it would actually develop a nuclear program and declare itself a nuclear power.¹⁰ Throughout the 1990s, India become more of a regional power with a thriving economy, increasingly strong military power, and growing regional status. After the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 which ended the Cold War, the U.S-India economic, political, and military relations have been steadily on the rise. However, the relationship did not begin to flourish until 2001.

In 1998, 24 years after first testing a nuclear device, India conducted a series of five additional nuclear test using its Integrated Guided Missile Program and declared itself a nuclear nation.¹¹ Initially, President Bill Clinton imposed economic and military sanctions on India, although it had little effect on India's economy, and sanctions were gradually lifted as international inspectors were allowed to monitor India's nuclear program. The U.S. began to see India's Nuclear Program as legitimate which was evident in Ambassador Robert Blackwill's first major address on U.S.-India relations in 2001. "The U.S. has an equal interest in the shape and substance of India's nuclear policy. This mutual preoccupation by our two countries seems entirely natural since each capital wants to be sure that the other takes no steps in the nuclear arena that could destabilize strategic and regional instability."¹² Under President George W. Bush the foundation was laid for the current strong relationship with India in 2013 with consistently improving diplomatic, military and economic relations.

India is emerging as a vital component of US foreign policy interests in the Asia Pacific region. It is home to more than 1.2 billion citizens, is the world's largest democracy, is strategically located in the Asia Pacific region, and is viewed as an "indispensable partner" as its growth and regional influence continues to flourish. According to Credit-Suisse International Financial Group, it expects India's economy to continue its strong rise at the 2012 rate of 5.7 percent and pegged 2013-14 growth at 6.9 per cent and at 7.5 per cent for FY'15.¹³ India continues to increase its global trade and is a significant trading partner with both the United States and China. India's economy has consistently been at the top of global economy growth in recent years.

Since early 2002, the United States and India have held numerous and unprecedented joint exercises involving all military branches.¹⁴ In 2005, the United States and India signed a

ten-year defense framework agreement, with the goal of expanding bilateral security cooperation.¹⁵ As a sign of the United States commitment to India, President Barack Obama visited India in November 2010 and addressed a joint session of the Indian Parliament, where he backed India's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council.¹⁶ India has not become a permanent member of the UN Security Council as of this monograph, however, with their increasingly large role in the Asia Pacific, fast growing economy, and strategic partnerships it is likely that India will gain a permanent seat to the council in the near future.

India's strategic location is central to the significant economic trade and commerce transiting the Indian Ocean from the African Continent, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. An estimated 50% of world container traffic and 70% of ship-borne oil and petroleum transit the Indian Ocean, the vast majority on its way to East Asia.¹⁷ While the United States has forward presence in Pacific, there is a very small U.S. permanent presence in the Indian Ocean region. As the U.S. faces greater fiscal constraints, it will depend on India's naval presence and other regional naval partners to protect these vital trade routes from piracy and terrorism which are significant for regional security and the world economy. India is bordered by Pakistan to the Northwest and China to the North with both, Pakistan and China, having conducted wars with India in their modern history. Understanding this geographic history of the Sino-Indian relations and the Pakistan-India relations are vital to establishing the foundation with India as its key partner in ensuring regional security and stability.

As the United States increases its strategic partnering efforts with India, there can be an expected strain on international relationships with India's adversaries as well as a significant effect on the balancing of powers in the region. While the U.S. is specifically looking for greater cooperation with India, there is a larger strategy for re-posturing our bases and facilities in the

Asia Pacific region for building partnership capacity and greater jointness with many of our regional allies. This re-posturing will give US Government agencies and Department of Defense increased flexibility as they proceed forward in its efforts within the region. While India and the United States will see this as balancing stability and security within the Asia Pacific region, one can expect China and Pakistan will see this as a direct threat to their strategic goals. With any re-posturing of forces there are always trade-offs and relationships with other countries which will stabilize or become more volatile. Based on increased cooperative efforts with India and the United States, analysis is required to gauge the impacts to regional relationships between two triads; China-India-United States and Pakistan-India-United States. This analysis will provide the legitimacy of an increased U.S.-India strategic partnership balancing China's growth and providing additional stability to the India-Pakistan relationship.

BALANCING THE GROWTH OF COMMUNIST CHINA

To understand India as a legitimate regional power, one must understand the Sino-Indian relationship, the current US-China relationship, and how the two merge in creating a balance of democracy and communism in the region. China and India share a 3,000 kilometer border and China will view an increased U.S.-Indian relation as the United States interference in the region. India's China problem began with its failure to properly assess the security implications of the takeover of Tibet in 1950 by Maoist China.¹⁸ For the first time in history the buffer between India and China was being removed. Up to this point, India and China have maintained relations for thousands of years, however, in 1962 China imposed a border dispute on India to take over what India considered as the autonomous zone of Tibet.¹⁹ India greatly underestimated Maoist China and was quickly defeated in the Sino-Indian War of 1962. This border dispute is still an

unresolved issue between China and India although India has tried to stabilize the situation on the border as much as possible through the Agreements on Maintaining Peace and Tranquility in the 90's. According to defense analysts, China is keeping the border issue unresolved so that it can continue to serve as a pressure point on India.²⁰ While China uses this as a pressure point, India had no choice but to use this dispute as an awakening for military and political growth. India doubled the size of its military forces and created Special Operations Forces specifically to operate in the contentious border area. The major obstacle for both sides is the ruggedness of the Himalayan Mountain range which caused more deaths of soldiers in the war than actual combat due to the harshness of the terrain and the freezing temperatures.

During this same time period, the communist party was threatening the democracy of India with an expanding communist party presence and influence. People's Republic of China (PRC) saw this as an opportunity to expand communism into India, however, the communist in India did not see communism the same as Mao in China and ultimately deteriorated. During the 1970-80s the Sino-Indian relationship was limited as both countries were focused on the Soviets and the Cold War. China saw Russia as a threat to their sovereignty and side with the United States and Pakistan. India sided with Russia during this period and looked to them for support in their border disputes with China and Pakistan, however, there was limited conflicts between the countries during this period. Beginning in the 1990s, India and China reestablished relations and have continued to build relations since. Major economic steps have been taken between the countries with over \$74 billion dollars in trade in 2012 and hopes to increase over \$100 billion dollars by 2015.²¹ China is currently India's largest trade partner and India is China's fourth largest trade partner.²² With significant economic cooperation between India and China, there is an expected level of disagreement with India's expanded economic and military cooperation with

the United States. While India and the United States are seeking to maintain regional stability, with a more powerful ally in India, the U.S. will be able to balance its efforts across the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions through its regional partners rather than a significant military force presence beyond the current forward force posture.

The United States-China relationship is characterized as being complex and multifaceted. What makes this complex and multifaceted is while China and the United States are both making efforts for a better worldwide economy, there are efforts to increase China's transparency to ensure there is balance to China's significant military growth. The United States and the People's Republic of China are neither allies nor enemies and the relationship is one of mutual distrust. The issue of mutual distrust of long-term intentions—termed here “strategic distrust”—has become a central concern in US-China relations. Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping recognized this reality in giving this issue first place in his review of key problems in U.S.-China relations during his major policy address in Washington, DC on February 15, 2012.²³ As China continues to increase its military power and attempted dominance in the region, the U.S. government provides the primary counterbalance to China's efforts. The U.S. views China as the emerging threat to regional and global stability. China views the U.S. as a competitor in military development, capability, and innovation, however, China partners with the U.S. on key economic ventures, transnational terrorism efforts, and piracy in the Indian Ocean. While the Chinese military is continuing to build combat power, China and the U.S. are the largest mutual trading partners, excluding the European Union and China is the largest foreign investor in the United States.²⁴

With the U.S. pivot to the Asia Pacific region, China is opposed to having U.S. warships in the international waters near its borders. The current regional instability is primarily due to

China's claims in the South China Sea and Taiwan. China views Taiwan and the East China Sea as part of its territory waiting for reunification. In 2010, the U.S. announced an agreement to sell Taiwan antimissile defense system, Blackhawk helicopters and military hardware totaling 6.4 billion dollars.²⁵ China warned the United States that their cooperation on international and regional territorial issues could suffer over the administration's decision to sell arms to Taiwan.²⁶ China is blaming the U.S. for diplomatic tensions over the dispute with Japan over islands in the East China Sea, warning the U.S. that this is their sovereign territory. Both Japan and Taiwan claim this island chain in the East China Sea as their sovereign territory as well. The U.S. controlled these islands from 1945 to 1972 before turning them over to Japan. This is the type of region dispute which could spiral into a large scale conflict in the region. It is critical to balance U.S. efforts to maintain regional security and stability while continuing to build relationships with allies. India's regional growth and partnership will serve as a counterbalance in the region allowing the U.S. to free up assets to maintain focus in other areas of the region.

As the United States begins its withdrawal from Afghanistan and the relationship with Pakistan continues to decline, China will see this as an opportunity to expand its relations with Pakistan. Pakistan is already the recipient of significant military aid and the Pakistan-China relationship contains strong diplomatic and economic ties. In March of 2013, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) stated "China has become the world's fifth-largest arms exporter, and 55% of its aid goes to Pakistan."²⁷ In the 1965, border dispute over the Kashmir, China supported Pakistan and since has embraces a significant military relationship to include joint aircraft development, joint development of main battle tanks, and conduct a significant number of joint exercises each year. While the China-Pakistan relationship is a geo-

political relationship, it primarily to offset the Indian-U.S. influence in the region, this works to the favor of U.S. policy in the Asia Pacific region to maintain security and stability.

In the China-India-United States triangle, China will recognize this increased U.S.-India partnership, however, they will not take any overt actions in response. This may cause China to become more cautious as India's role in security and stability in the region may challenges their strategic objectives. This will prove the greater legitimacy of India which will meet the U.S. strategic goals in the region of security and stability via our regional partners. The most probably situation in this triangle will be that all three will work together in a relationship of mutual respect and seek common ground on common interest, especially in the realm of transnational problems such as terrorism.²⁸ While at times, one country may benefit more than they others, no country in this triangle will benefit from a confrontational relationship.

STABILIZING DIPLOMACY WITH PAKISTAN AND INDIA

The U.S.-Pakistan-India relationship contains greater complexity than the U.S.-China-India relationship. The India-Pakistan relationship is much more than just a border dispute but one of historical religious partition of the states which were both one under the British Empire. One must understand this modern history of India and Pakistan, the history of the United States and Pakistan, and how strengthening one relationship, will cause the other strengthen. Defense Analyst would assume this increased U.S. strategic partnership with India will continue to push Pakistan away from the United States, however, it will have the opposite effect. This strengthening relationship with India will not affect the Pakistan-India relationship but it will cause Pakistan to re-think its relationship with the United States and how it can prevent any further instability in the region.

Many analysts with the lack of historical knowledge would characterize the India-Pakistan relationship as a border dispute, however, it is deeply rooted in religious and cultural divide which is still unsettled after 60 years. From 1858 to 1947, the current areas of Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Burma, were all under British rule as part of the British Empire. After World War II the British had significant economic, social, and psychological consequences to manage and could not control its significant amount of territory under its empire and begin to retract.²⁹ The British had to determine how to best settle the representation of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in the future Indian State and their planned withdrawal was significantly influenced by many of the ruling elite of the Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.

This partition of India in 1947 promised its people both political and religious freedom through the liberation of India from British rule and the creation of a Muslim state of Pakistan.³⁰ What ensued in the partition of India and Pakistan was the deaths of up to 1 million men, women, and children and over 12 million people displaced. The most ferocious contested province in the partition was the Punjab, where frequent individual killings occurred, including disfigurement, dismemberment, and rape of women were common between the Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs.³¹ One of the most significant and divisive aspects resulting from the partition was the permanent separation of Indians and Pakistanis from each other and their inability to cross their new border. This partition plays a central role in the making of new India and Pakistani national identities and the apparent irreconcilable differences which continue to exist today.

The India-Pakistan relationship has continued to be marred by conflict since the partition. Immediately following the partition, the Kashmir, the northwest region of the Indian subcontinent, which was divided in the partition, became the primary area of dispute between Pakistan and India. This area is still a point of contention today and has been contested in the

immediate years following the partition in 1948, in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965, and more recently in the Kargil conflict in 1999. One other significant conflict between India and Pakistan occurred in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, where India supported for the Bengalis in East Pakistan helped liberated East Pakistan and created the nation of Bangladesh. The major point of contention today is Pakistan's support of terrorism into India and other parts of the world.

Although India is 80 % Hindus, it is also home to 154 million Muslims or 13 % of its population, the third largest Muslim population in the world after Indonesia and Pakistan. Tolerable inter-communal relations are sine qua non of Indian stability and ascendancy, for throughout India Muslims and Hindus must interact in business transactions daily.³² India has more to lose from extremist Islam than arguably any other country in the world.³³ Much of the terrorism conducted in India has been fueled by Islamic extremist from Pakistan. The Indians Government believes the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) has supported Islamic extremist and multiple terrorist groups including Al-Qaeda, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JEM) and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (LT) entering into India and conducting attacks. The Indian Government has charged LT with committing the 26-29 November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, in which gunmen using automatic weapons and grenades attacked several sites, killing more than 160 people.³⁴ As long as Pakistan allows or provides support to terrorist organization to operate with impunity, the relations with India will remain in in the status quo for some years to come.

The United States was among the first nations to establish relations with Pakistan in late 1940s, and the relationship has been primarily based on extensive economic, scientific, and military assistance to Pakistan. The United States is the second-largest supplier of military equipment to Pakistan after China, and largest aid contributor with a total of \$4.3 billion in 2010.³⁵ The United States and Pakistan currently have a strained diplomatic relationship due to

the combat operations in Afghanistan spilling over into Pakistan as well as Pakistan's inability or un-willingness to stop terrorist from using Pakistan as a safehaven. Several measures to restrict U.S. aid to Pakistan in 2013 are winding their way through the 112th Congress, reflecting Members' ongoing concerns with Pakistan. Nevertheless, many U.S. government and independent analysts continue to assert that U.S. strategic interests are inextricably linked with a stable Pakistan that can effectively rule all of its territory and contribute to the stability in the region.³⁶ For this reason, the U.S. government will address the on-going relationship with Pakistan while building its strategic partnership with India.

While the U.S. shifts its focus to the Asia Pacific region and increases its partnership with India, one can surmise Pakistan will not support these increased relations with a country they are constantly opposed. Islamabad is concerned that its already disadvantageous conventional military status vis-à-vis New Delhi will be further eroded by India's acquisition of sophisticated "force multipliers from the U.S."³⁷ However, the Pakistani administration will begin to feel the pressure of decreased economic aid from the United States and increase pressure from China to combat transnational terrorism in their country. From the Chinese perspective, Pakistan is attracting further attention from the United States to the region with their inability to combat the transnational terrorist operating from within their borders.³⁸ Pakistan cannot face the pressure from both the U.S. and China, its largest arms and aid providers, without seeking solutions to its issues with both countries. In 2013, China openly stated in the press it will not allow Pakistan to draw a wedge into the U.S.-China relationship. As the U.S. war effort in Afghanistan is reduced, Pakistan will seek U.S. assistance and increased diplomatic relations to deal with the transnational terrorist groups. This assistance, along with the U.S. remaining neutral to the tumultuous relationship between India and Pakistan, will allow the U.S. to restore a strong

relationship with Pakistan as well as build the strategic partnership with India. Maintaining relations with Pakistan is important to the U.S. due to China's increasing growth and dominance in the region. If the U.S. relations with Pakistan completely fracture, China will view this as an opportunity. The greatest U.S.-Pakistan relations issue will be trust, which has been a continuing issue during the past 11 years in the Global War on Terror and will take time to rebuild.

INCREASED US-INDIAN SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INTEROPERABILITY

The first two supporting points of this monograph prove the "why" or results of increased U.S. Strategic relations with India. This last supporting point will show the "how" of this strategic partnership. In the 2013 U.S Pacific Commander's Guidance, it directs the development of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership in three ways: (1) Deepen military-to-military interaction and interoperability, (2) Encourage India's military-to-civilian relationships to counter common threats, and (3) Support India's evolution as a leading and stabilizing force in South Asia.³⁹

While the U.S. Pacific Commands effort in India is just one small part of the whole-of-government approach to the strategic partnering, it breaks down into the individual military services bilateral relationships. Because of the size of the U.S and Indian militaries, each branch of service has their own bilateral relationships occurring to build capability and interoperability of both militaries. This supporting point will focus on Indian and U.S. SOF forces proving India's Special Operations Forces as the ideal partner for USSOCOM forces in the Asia Pacific region. This partnership will be broken down into short-term and long-term goals to maximize the interoperability over a sustained relationship.

The U.S. Department of Defense has maintained a limited relationship with India's military since the 1960's however, the relationship has been consistently strong for the past 12

years.⁴⁰ USSOCOM's overt arm in the Asia Pacific region is Special Operations Command, Pacific Command (SOCPAC). This element manages all Special Operation Activities throughout Pacific Command Area of Responsibility (AOR) answering to the Commander, PACOM and the Commander, USSOCOM. While USSOCOM will focus its efforts across a broad list of regional partners, there are clearly partner nations which can significantly support and increase U.S. influence in the region. USSOCOM and India SOF began its military-to-military relationship through bilateral and multilateral exercises beginning in 2002.⁴¹ These have expanded to the current state of including multiple Joint Combined Exercises for Training (JCETs) as well as multilateral exercises across all branches of SOF. Similar to US SOF, Indian SOF has elements aligned with each particular branch of service. The Indian Army has the Para Commandos which closely resemble US Army Special Forces, as well as Ghatak platoons which mostly resemble U.S. Army's 75th Ranger Regiment. The Indian Navy has Marine Commandos (MARCOS) which closely resembles U.S. Navy Seals. Lastly, the Indian Air Force has the Garud Commando Force which closely resembles U.S Air Force Special Tactics Squadrons. In addition to these military forces there are three paramilitary forces, Special Frontier Forces, 51st Special Action Group-National Security Guards, and the Special Protection Group, which focus primarily on counterterrorism and internal security.⁴²

To increase US-India bilateral relationships in the short-term, USSOCOM should focus across all branches of Indian SOF for increased Joint Exercises for Training. This joint training will be conducted at the tactical level, however, when combining training between services it becomes operational and strategic. This training can be short-term forecasted and is cost-effective due to the small footprint of SOF forces. While SOF forces are small in nature and more cost effective, the focus covers the strategic, operational and tactical levels of service. This

type of training in the short-term also allows an assessment of the current state of the force and narrows the focus where efforts can be placed for long-term sustainment. The ultimate goal of this short-term objective is to conduct bilateral and work towards multilateral large-scale exercises testing the maximums of SOF capability for both U.S.-Indian militaries across all services. India is in the process of conducting a large scale equipment modernization across its forces. These realistic training exercises will allow the U.S. SOF to shape the modernization efforts of India's SOF forces.

A second short-term effort to increase the relations would be reciprocal in nature by placing Special Operations Liaison Officers with Indian SOF Forces and vice-versa. This liaison is required to build and maintain rapport in order to earn the trust of the SOF commanders at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels for each service SOF elements. The immediate impact would be significant in the short-term gain and long-term cooperation. The Special Operations Liaison Officer would provide improved interoperability between US forces and multinational partners during and future combined operations. This liaison becomes an asset for both countries to provide a shared vision for training, operations, or intelligence as well as creating a personalized relationship with both Indian and U.S. SOF leadership. If a crisis arises in the Asia Pacific region, there is no more important figure than a liaison officer to provide that immediate link to the AOR with an established level of trust.

The third and final short-term cooperation effort to expand the capability and interoperability between US-Indian SOF forces would be by opening more SOF specific school quotas to each country advanced SOF courses. While there are current ongoing efforts between the Indian Army and U.S. Army, SOF Officers and enlisted personnel are limited in this aspect to niche or tactical level courses. Opening SOF specific courses, to include officer and enlisted

Professional Military Education (PME) courses, would further the bond between officers and enlisted service members of each country. Promoting attendance to each countries SOF specific schools will only provide greater interoperability and build greater trust between the forces. Opening these courses to India SOF personnel would come at a limited cost to the U.S. through the International Military Education and Training program, which are pre-programed funds through the Department of State however; the return on the investment of India's SOF forces in the Asia Pacific region would far outweigh the minimal cost with increased interoperability between the SOF forces.⁴³

These three short-term efforts will increase interoperability, build a strong layer of trust, and expand the effectiveness of both militaries SOF Forces. Increasing the amount of JCETs, providing Special Operations Liaison Officers, and opening SOF-specific military education opportunities will build upon the current relationship and will further set a foundation for more advanced long-term efforts. These short-term efforts can be executed on a fraction of the fiscal budget it would take to execute this level effectiveness with conventional forces due to their small size, forward presence, and specificity in training. This fiscal savings is of great concern as DOD looks to be most effective with the limited budget it is allocated and SOF forces offer a good return on investment due to its small size, ease of logistical support, and forward presence in the Asia Pacific region.

Long-term cooperation efforts rely on foundations of current ongoing efforts and proposed short-term efforts previously shown. These long-term cooperation efforts will establish the U.S.-India bilateral relationship as a regional leader creating a more secure and stable environment. The first of these long-term efforts proposed is to establish a regional intelligence

fusion center. This intelligence fusion center will track regional threats ranging from a near-peer adversary, terrorist cells, or any perceived threat within the Area of Responsibility (AOR). This regional fusion center would be cooperation of both U.S.-India SOF personnel from all services to include the addition of U.S. and India's intelligence agencies. This intelligence fusion center would allow real-time intelligence to respond to any emerging threat in the region as well as apply the appropriate amount of force to the threat. These fusion centers will not only support U.S-Indian efforts in the Asia Pacific region but also Allies to both nations as well. Due to India's strategic location as the crossroads between East and West Asia, the fusion cell can support intelligence in the Asia Pacific region as well as portions of the CENTCOM Area of Responsibility in East Asia. This fusion center can provide allies with releasable national intelligence data from both the U.S. and India allowing real-time feedback on targets and a reduction emerging threats in the Asia Pacific region.⁴⁴

The second long-term cooperation effort would be a more permanent forward presence of U.S SOF forces based in India. Ideally, this force would be co-located with Indian SOF forces from the same service however; this permanent basing would allow the U.S. SOF to have the forward presence near the Indian Ocean needed to respond to immediate crisis in the region. This commitment of U.S. SOF forces would strengthen and foster a network of mutually supporting partnerships that are based on shared security interests providing immediate results. Initially this effort could be similar to the rotational basing being conducted by U.S. Marines in Darwin, Australia which has been 250 Marines and will expand up to 2,500 Marines by 2014.⁴⁵ The feedback from this forward basing has been indicative of the positive impacts on the economy and security in the region.⁴⁶ Providing a permanent forward presence for SOF forces requires a much smaller footprint than much larger U.S. conventional forces with equal to greater capability

and effects. This forward basing of such a small, but effective force is more palatable to both U.S. and India's government administrations. With a permanent forward presence of SOF forces, interoperability with Indian SOF forces would exponentially serve as a force multiplier in the region. With the permanent presence, both SOF forces would be able to build rapport on a unit level versus a Commander to Commander relationship which traditionally happens during many of the JCETs executed each year. This forward posturing of SOF assets would allow for greater interaction with other partner nations within the region.

The third and final long-term cooperation effort would be to develop a SOF aviation capability modeled after the U.S. Army's 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment. While India's SOF has limited aircraft to support its operations, it cannot conduct sustained operation across India's SOF forces with the current posture of its aviation assets. Much of India's current fleet of Mi-26 helicopters was purchased in the early 1980s and lack spares for replacement parts.⁴⁷ When one Mi-26 helicopter breaks down or is grounded, India's Air Force loses two aircraft due to cannibalization within the fleet. This capability building effort would be a long-term cooperation effort which would require considerable expertise, significant fiscal cost, as well as subject matter experts in SOF aviation community to develop this capability and build it to a sustainable capacity. This cooperation effort would come at the most opportune time while India is taking large measures across the force to modernize its military equipment.

In less than a decade, and starting at zero, we have seen the Foreign Military Sales program with India grow to a combined total case value of approximately \$6 billion.⁴⁸ India has primarily purchased weapons, aircraft, and military equipment from the United States in their modernization efforts and are expected to spend the same over the next four years. Included in the equipment purchased over the past four years was 15 Chinook heavy lift helicopters which

are critical to the establishment of a Special Operations Aviation Regiment.⁴⁹ While this equipment was not designated specifically for SOF, it is dual used by Indian Army conventional and SOF forces. The India Army has recently expressed interest in building the SOAR capability in discussions with Commander, SOCPAC after a speech given at India's National Defense College. USSOCOM supporting an effort of this magnitude would significantly increase the response of India's SOF to security and stability challenges in the region.⁵⁰

After compiling the short-term and long-term cooperation efforts, what can U.S. SOF forces gain from the India SOF experience? India's SOF were originally regionally oriented towards threats to India's territories in the north and northwest due to the vast size of the country, rugged terrain in the north, and diverse religious and cultural demographics. While India's SOF forces are now trained on all tasks equally across the force, there are still specific focus areas where U.S. SOF can capitalize on India SOF's experience in the region. India, unlike the U.S., is faced with constant adversarial threats along its borders with Pakistan and China. Since the inception of India's SOF forces during the border clash with China, they have fought primarily with Pakistani forces along its northwest border. This has allowed India's SOF forces to test and validate their forces in operations within their own country. This is a threat that U.S. SOF forces never have to deal with on U.S. soil. As U.S. SOF forces have been primarily operating in two theaters of war since 2001, India's SOF can refocus our efforts to threats outside of areas of armed conflict and focus on more peer-to-peer and asymmetrical in the Asia Pacific region. India's SOF forces have been focused on China for more than 50 years. Access to this base of knowledge would allow U.S. SOF to gain a greater understanding of the Chinese military including the ideology of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

CONCLUSION

India is the key U.S. strategic partner nation in the Asia Pacific region. India's ability to balance the growth of communist China and create a strategic balance with Pakistan will create a region of security and stability. This is in-line with the direction of the National Security Strategy and the Defense Strategic Guidance of 2012. India's very capable Special Operations Forces make it a very logical choice for building a key sustainable relationship to provide stability and security in the region. With increased USSOCOM partnerships with India's SOF for both short-term and long-term goals, India's SOF forces will serve as a force multiplier in providing regional stability to prevent future large scale conflicts. This force multiplier along with the additional U.S. whole-of-government approach to strengthening the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership.

By providing short-term cooperation efforts which legitimize India as a regional leader U.S.SOF must focus on expanding U.S.-Indian SOF exercises to increase interoperability, as well as developing an integrated U.S-Indian SOF liaison network. Additionally U.S-India SOF will expanding individual training opportunities between countries to solidify and build trust in the relationship in the short-term. These short term goals will expand upon the existing relations to lead into the long-term cooperation efforts of creating an Intelligence Fusion Center in India to combat and monitor threats in the Asia Pacific region. The Intelligence Fusion center would solidify India's legitimacy in the region amongst the allies as well as adversaries. Having U.S. SOF forces with a permanent forward presence in the region allows for increased trust and camaraderie amongst host-nation and SOF forces. India is the ideal location in the region allowing a balanced SOF approach to the pivot across Asia. The last long-term cooperation effort is to create a Special Operations Aviation capability within the Indian Army which is a force

multiplier across the battlefield. Developing this SOF aviation asset significantly increases the operational reach of Indian SOF providing increased legitimacy as a significant player for stability and security in the region.⁵¹

Indian SOF has many years of experience defending their home borders against neighboring nations. This experience was a forcing function for Indian SOF and will provide U.S. SOF forces with a different perspective as we move away from the direct approaches conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq to a more indirect approach solidifying long-term legitimacy.

As India expands as a legitimate pillar of security and stability in the region, one can surmise that the balance between neighboring countries of Pakistan and China will stabilize with India. China and India are increasing their relationships and opening trade avenues which did not exist prior to the past five years. Pakistan and India are taking small steps to creating a cordial relationship, however, it is expected that each nation will continue to stake their claim to the Kashmir region and not affect the larger Asia Pacific region. As U.S. SOF and DOD forces re-posture across the Asia Pacific region, relationships have been established and are being expanded upon to create long-lasting security and stability. By combining the capability of India's SOF forces in the region, with other services trained through bilateral relationship, this will posture India as the legitimate regional force to react to crisis in the region. If U.S. SOF and DOD properly execute the pivot to Asia Pacific region conducting an indirect approach of capacity and capability building, U.S. forces should be able to reduce the amount of U.S. troops in the region by 2020.

NOTES

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