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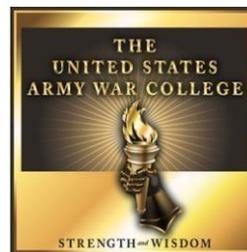
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Towards an Indo-American Alliance

by

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Towards an Indo-American Alliance

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Abstract

Stability in the Asia-Pacific will define American security interests for the foreseeable future. Increased cooperation between the United States and regional actors such as Japan and Australia have again raised questions about the status of America's relationship with India and the potential for a bilateral or quadrilateral alliance. American regional policy in South Asia has long been reactive and shortsighted. The United States must pursue opportunity in its regional strategy and invest heavily in partnering with India to gain a long term strategic advantage in the region. Indian and American interests are once again intersecting at a time of improved relationships between the world's largest two democracies. Improving relations with India and moving the two countries towards an alliance is in the enduring national interest of both states. India has historically remained non-aligned, but as it establishes itself as a great power and takes a larger role in the international system, its outlook is changing. An improved relationship with India can advance American interests in the Asia-Pacific region by improving the likelihood of a positive outcome in Afghanistan, balancing against Chinese encroachment, and reducing Russian influence.

Towards an Indo-American Alliance

Stability in the Asia-Pacific will define American security interests for the foreseeable future. To this end, the United States (U.S.) needs a Pacific strategic alliance just as it has enjoyed in Europe with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). This alliance is emerging in the form of increasing quadrilateral cooperation between the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. China's rapid and increasingly aggressive expansion has created unease in the region. As a result, limited trilateral defense agreements between the United States, Japan, and Australia have emerged. Additionally, India has increased its security cooperation efforts with Japan, Australia, and the United States.¹ The United States has bilateral, mutual defense agreements with Australia and Japan; the next logical step is a bilateral agreement with India, which would position the United States as the guarantor of a Quadrilateral Asia-Pacific Alliance. The development of this quadrilateral partnership is identified in the 2017 National Security Strategy.²

Opportunities in South Asia could set the conditions for a long-term American strategic advantage in the region. Efforts are needed that look beyond the immediacy of the Afghanistan conflict and that focus on developing new regional partnerships to advance American interests and influence as outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy.³ An understanding of how India's national interests and regional perspectives inform their foreign policy points to the confluence of Indo-American national security interests. This revelation offers unique opportunities for both countries, potentially breathing new life into an old problem and setting the South Asian stage in favor of Indo-American interests for decades to come.

Indian Interests and Perspectives

India sees itself as a foundational world civilization and a great power.⁴ In sheer mass, India is a cornerstone of Asia: home to 1.2 billion people with a Gross Domestic Product of \$8.7 trillion dollars⁵ and the world's second largest army.⁶ In addition to these tangible resources, India is also home to great schools of thought and an enduring cultural legacy. Despite these factors, India is not often recognized as a great power, but a compelling argument can be made that India has arrived.⁷ Regional dynamics point to it being a key player in South Asia with clear extra-regional economic and security interests and the resources with which to pursue them.⁸

India's regional approach and foreign policy reflect its decision to act like a great power in the pursuit of its national security interests.⁹ India's economic expansion into Central Asia, its delivery of military aid to Afghanistan and Bangladesh, and a convergence of strategic interests with the United States all point to interests and influence which expand beyond the region.¹⁰ India is recognized by the great powers at play within the region and the international system as a force to be considered.¹¹

India's pursuit of its national security interests is best explained through the writings of one of its leading philosophers, Kautilya. The Indian statesman and political advisor emerged around 300 BCE and provided a realist outlook on geopolitics through his seminal work, *The Arthashastra*.¹² The treatise proves a classical vision of political wisdom and guided the creation of the Mauryan Empire. Importantly, its theory provides a culturally and historically informed construct for assessing Indian behavior. Kautilyan logic continues to influence Indian strategic thought today and is manifest in India's national security interests and their assessment of regional and international relations.

Through Indian Eyes: National Security Interests

Although India has long seen itself as a non-aligned state, its emergence as a great power is driving it towards a more active role in the international system. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's shift in Indian foreign policy reveals three core national interests. The first is a desire to sustain the international system, which helped give rise to Indian power and influence. Creating stability within the international system also allows India to address internal economic and societal development through foreign investment, infrastructure projects, and maintaining the energy security necessary to sustain its growth.¹³ India continues to pursue a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), commensurate with its role in the international system.

A second national interest is the goal of establishing Indian hegemony in its traditional sphere of influence. This objective requires that India manage relationships with two actors whose fates seem inextricably linked: Afghanistan and Pakistan. A stable Afghanistan led by a legitimate, non-Taliban government which does not harbor or export terrorism is India's objective.¹⁴ With respect to Pakistan, India seeks to deter Pakistan and minimize cross-border terrorism in a manner which does not escalate armed conflict between these two nuclear states beyond the conventional threshold.¹⁵

A third Indian vital national interest is managing Chinese encroachment into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). This issue is complex and marred by a history of strategic mutual mistrust.¹⁶ India interprets China's outreach to South Asian nations with suspicion and concern that it may become encircled by Chinese surrogates. As U.S. relations with Pakistan have degraded over time, China has stepped in to fill the vacuum while simultaneously reaching out to Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar in

an effort to improve access to ports in the Indian Ocean Region—directly competing in India’s traditional sphere of influence.¹⁷

The Indian Neighborhood: Kautilya’s Mandala Assessment

India seeks to maintain hegemony in its traditional sphere of influence. Kautilya described this area as emanating from the Indian subcontinent west to Persia, north to Afghanistan, and east to Bengal.¹⁸ Today this region is roughly composed of the eight member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).¹⁹ India dominates this area by possessing over 80% of the SAARC’s landmass, population, and gross domestic product.²⁰

Assessing India’s regional neighborhood through the lens of Kautilya’s Mandala theory can help strategic leaders understand Indian actions and intentions. Kautilya’s assessment tool of geopolitics assumed that bordering kingdoms were inherently hostile and that those nations immediately beyond, or opposite a neighboring state were potential allies.²¹ Though Kautilya used this model to describe smaller, warring kingdoms and not states known today, it continues to offer an insightful premise for comprehending today’s Indian perspective.²²

Applying the Mandala theory clarifies Indian relationships in South Asia. The model places Pakistan and India at odds as bordering states and Afghanistan as a potential Indian ally. Other states within India’s traditional sphere of influence include Bangladesh, Burma, and Sri Lanka as potential adversaries.²³ At the strategic level, the Mandala theory adds China as a potential adversary and Iran as a potential ally for India.²⁴ A decline in U.S.-Pakistani relations coupled with China’s expansive One Belt One Road (OBOR) and the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiatives have facilitated closer Sino-Pak relations. China, balancing against its largest regional rival,

India, has reaffirmed its patron-client relationship with Pakistan. Likewise, India has expanded its economic ties with Iran by balancing the Sino-Pak relationship with the Charbahar port project.²⁵ Thus, the Mandala theory reflects the current state of relations within both the traditional Indian sphere of influence and at the strategic level.

Two Attributes of Indian Statecraft

This assessment of Indian actions and its regional perspective also points toward two defining attributes of Indian statecraft: Strategic Partnerships and Silent War. These factors are also congruent with Kautilya's theory of statecraft. Strategic Partnership Agreements (SPA) are a policy position consistent with Kautilyan thought regarding a preference for alignment over alliances. Kautilya's concept of "silent war" encourages nations to seek advantages over their adversaries, even when overt hostilities are not prudent. It is through these concepts of strategic partnerships in which India exerts its influence in foreign policy with friendly states and silent war, which emphasizes competition over conflict, that India pursues its interests vis-à-vis Pakistan and China.

Strategic Partnerships: Kautilyan Alignment

Strategic Partnership Agreements are not new to the region. They began as a Soviet approach to bilateral relations during the Cold War and remain a familiar tool in Asia. The Soviets pursued bilateral agreements because they offered a way to establish patron-client relations, avoided the constraints of multi-state alliances, and allowed them to operate outside of the construct of the international system.²⁶ An inclination to these behaviors can be seen in India's historical policy of non-alignment. India sees strategic partnerships from a Kautilyan or utilitarian perspective, in that they avoid entangling alliances while also providing India with "...access to markets, finance, technology, arms, intelligence, and other commodities that it does not possess..." in pursuit of its

national interests.²⁷ India has rapidly increased the use of SPAs by signing 28 agreements since 1998 with countries as varied as the United States, China, and Afghanistan.²⁸ Raju Thomas identifies these maneuvers as alignment strategies, which he argues have served India as well or better than alliances which could compel India to act militarily.²⁹

The Indo-Afghan SPA,³⁰ signed in October of 2011, provides insights into how India focuses on policy alignment in its statecraft.³¹ The SPA references the democratic nature of the two states, a desire to see the entire region prosper, and a shared adherence to international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter. Diplomatically, the SPA requires Afghanistan's commitment to support India's pursuit of a permanent seat on the UNSC. The SPA also outlines a robust agenda of social, cultural, academic, and intellectual exchanges to bolster historical and cultural links between the two states.³² Trade and economic cooperation are also covered, with a focus on regional cooperation with third countries—a clear nod at the trilateral Charbahar port agreement which includes Iran and is discussed later in this paper.^{33 34} Importantly, the SPA envisions Afghanistan “...as a trade, transportation and energy hub connecting Central and South Asia....”³⁵ Most dramatically, the SPA changes India's long stance of non-involvement in the Afghan security situation by calling for military support to Afghanistan. The SPA allows India to “...assist, as mutually determined, in the training, equipping and capacity building programmes for Afghan National Security Forces.”³⁶

The Indo-Afghan SPA clearly embraces all three of India's national security interests. The SPA supports India's desired role in the international system through the democratization of Afghanistan and India's pursuit of a permanent seat on the UNSC.

Furthermore, it indicates that India's policy of alignment is not one which is limited to benign approaches as demonstrated by the introduction of lethal aid. This policy change indicates India sees its vital national interests at stake and is determined to see the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) emerge from conflict as a pro-Indian democracy. India's outreach to Afghanistan, coupled with its Charbahar initiative in Iran, show a determination to open Central Asian markets to India's economy and ensure its own energy security. India's pursuit of a SPA with Afghanistan clearly demonstrates attributes of Kautilyan logic in its Mandala theory assessment of friendly and hostile states, its alignment with Afghanistan, and its posturing to balance and confront its nuclear armed rival-neighbors—Pakistan and China—through what Kautilya would refer to as silent war.

Balancing: Kautilyan Silent Warfare

India sees itself in realist terms relative to Pakistan and China, but it also acknowledges the modern-era constraints placed on nation-state behavior. Kautilya was in many ways a classical realist in his assertion that states must seek or suffer conquest.³⁷ With the founding of the United Nations (UN), states were granted new rights under which the concept of sovereignty is closely guarded and wars of aggression are unlawful.³⁸ India's ability to counter Pakistan and China is both limited and complicated by the stabilizing effects of nuclear weapons. Though Kautilya did not have to consider the constraints of an international system and nuclear weapons, the *Arthashastra* provides applicable guidance. Kautilya assessed kings would be confronted with two types of rivals: weak ones which were to be exterminated (conquered) and strong ones requiring a longer approach of steady harassment and

weakening.³⁹ India views Pakistan and China as strong states and is applying long-term strategies to counter them by pursuing competitive advantages across multiple instruments of national power.

Facing a strong, nuclear-armed, and belligerent neighbor, Kautilyan thought steers India away from direct confrontation with Pakistan and towards a long-term approach of harassment and weakening through the application of soft power and non-military instruments of national power—balancing in modern realism parlance. Kautilyan success in this modern context would be the avoidance of large-scale conventional conflict with Pakistan and the denial of Afghanistan's territory to the Pakistani military.⁴⁰ This approach is represented in India's persistent economic, cultural, and political support for the government of Afghanistan and its increasing support for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) in the form of training, equipment, and most recently, lethal aid. A stable and Indian-friendly Afghanistan would require Pakistan to rethink its doctrine of strategic depth and its continued indifference to, if not overt support for, violent extremist organizations (VEO) within its borders. Without Afghanistan to export and employ VEOs against, Pakistan will be forced to address its policy of supporting these proxies, else be threatened by them. The effect of Afghanistan's deepening relationship with India on the Pakistani psyche should not be underestimated, nor should India's recent response to Pakistani-sponsored terrorist attacks on Indian military targets which resulted in special operations missions launched into Pakistan.⁴¹

Afghanistan's refusal to accept Pakistani military aid provides India an opportunity to support a Mandalan ally while harassing a Mandalan foe. Within months

of signing the SPA, India outlined a program to train over 25,000 Afghan officers and soldiers.⁴² By 2014 this evolved beyond commissioning and initial entry programs to the training of Afghan Commandos.⁴³ Indian support expanded to non-lethal aid with the delivery of three light utility helicopters 2015.⁴⁴ A significant shift in Indian policy came in 2016 with the first provision of Indian lethal aid in the form of four Mi-35 attack helicopters which were delivered to the Afghan Air Force.⁴⁵ India's delivery of lethal aid was widely received as a positive development by the Afghans and quietly acknowledged by the U.S.-led Resolute Support Mission Afghanistan (RSMA) in Kabul.

Because of military disadvantages in capability and capacity relative to China, India is limited to a soft-power approach to managing Sino-Indian relations.⁴⁶ Historically, India has firmly maintained its status as a non-aligned state, in part out of a desire to not provoke China militarily.⁴⁷ China, is also approaching relations with India with a longer view, employing a strategy of economic entanglement to increase the costs of conflict between the two states—an approach it has arguably used effectively with the United States so far.⁴⁸

Chinese cooperation with Pakistan on the OBOR and CPEC initiatives demonstrate China's intent on securing a more direct trade route to Europe and Africa and access to energy resources which are not dependent upon the Straits of Malacca. This project spans contested land in Kashmir which, while controlled by Pakistan, is claimed by India.⁴⁹ India protested the use of the contested Kashmir territory by skipping China's Belt and Road Forum meeting in 2017 and gained U.S. support for their position in the process by deftly using their international influence to bring attention to Chinese expansionism.⁵⁰ China has invested heavily in the Pakistani Port of Gwardar. Situated

on the Gulf of Oman, Gwardar marks the termination point of the Sino-Pak CPEC effort/ Importantly, the port provides China access to the Indian Ocean Region and West Africa where China recently opened a port in Djibouti.⁵¹ The Indo-Iranian effort at Charbahar, just 170 kilometers west of Gwardar, is a counter to Chinese influence and demonstrates India's determined pursuit of economic expansion and energy security. Additionally, China and India continue to contest territory on the Doklam Plateau in the Himalayas, another source of friction left over from the Sino-Indian War.⁵²

Opportunity in Asia

Historically, Washington has reacted in response to threats as opposed to the pursuit of opportunity when developing its South Asian policy.⁵³ Current U.S. policy for Asia aligns with Indian interests. The United States must develop a persistent strategy for stabilizing Afghanistan by encouraging Pakistan's compliance with international norms and managing the peaceful rise of China.⁵⁴ These goals, outlined in the 2017 National Security Strategy, are also congruent with India's desire to increase its role in the international community and the pursuit of their own interests. The convergence of national security interests and similar long term regional policy creates the opportunity for an Indo-American alliance.

American National Security Interests

America's National Security Interests in Asia center around regional stability and Afghanistan is at the heart of this discussion. The United States has three objectives in Afghanistan: It seeks an honorable and enduring outcome, which averts a rapid withdrawal that creates an opportunity for the re-emergence of an Afghanistan controlled by VEOs and which provides a U.S. platform from which to combat the designated terrorist groups active in the region.⁵⁵ These interests are codified in the

2014 Bilateral Support Agreement (BSA) and reinforced by America's continued presence in Afghanistan.⁵⁶

Pakistan poses the most challenging long-term threat to regional stability and U.S. national interests. Pakistan remains a nuclear armed garrison state which lapses in and out of pseudo-democratic status and runs the gamut of state behavior from supporting terrorism to nuclear brinkmanship. In a 2017 policy speech President Trump committed to an enduring U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and addressed Pakistan's dual game of playing the U.S. ally while ignoring Taliban and other VEOs which utilize Pakistan for sanctuary. This commitment was acted upon in January of 2018 when the United States suspended military aid to Pakistan indefinitely.⁵⁷

If the epicenter of American national interests in Central Asia is Afghanistan, then China is the middle kingdom of America's Pacific interests. While sustaining a rules-based international order, advancing American leadership, and cooperative efforts to maintain peace and security in the region are enduring American interests identified in the National Security Strategy,⁵⁸ there are also national security interests identified in the National Military Strategy.⁵⁹ Securing the global economic system and the preservation and expansion of a rules-based, democratic world order are interests underpinned by an American desire to strengthen and expand its base of allies and partners.⁶⁰

Chinese foreign policy is increasingly aggressive, expansionist, and presents the largest and most immediate threat to American interests in the Pacific. Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea and their militarization challenge the security and confidence of American allies.⁶¹ China's expansion into the Indian Ocean Region

through the long-term leasing of sea ports in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, ostensibly for economic purposes, may become militarized in the future as was the Chinese effort in Djibouti.⁶² China's behavior, which relies on coercive debt to gain access, challenges the rules-based system which represents the basis of American influence and provides the framework for the continued rise of India.

American interests in Afghanistan center around the economic integration of Afghanistan and the denial of safe haven to al-Qaeda and its affiliates, core interests identified in the 2012 U.S.-Afghan Strategic Partnership Agreement.⁶³ In the Pacific, American interests pivot on the sustainment of a rules-based international system and the security of the global economic system in a clear convergence of interests with India.⁶⁴ These shared interests offer unique opportunities for the United States in the form of new, mutually beneficial alliances or agreements with India—a great power in South Asia where the United States has a dearth of powerful allies.

An Indo-American Alliance

The idea of an Indo-American alliance is not new. At least twice in the last 50 years the world's two largest democracies grew close enough to bring an alliance into the realm of the possible. The first time followed the Sino-Indian War of 1962. U.S. military support to India during the conflict improved relations, though this period is overshadowed in American history by the U.S. Cuban Missile Crisis. American assistance resulted in improved Indian public perception of the United States and an agreement to increase military exercises and sales.⁶⁵ The death of President John F. Kennedy and Prime Minister Nehru, paired with increasing U.S. involvement in Vietnam saw India drift towards Russia for military support.⁶⁶ India's defense relationship with Russia was cemented by President Richard Nixon's Chinese détente.⁶⁷

A second period of improved relations developed through the 1990s under Presidents William Clinton and George Bush. During this period the United States backed India in the Kargil War with Pakistan and signed a civil nuclear agreement with India, thus resolving lingering non-proliferation issues and acknowledging India as a nuclear armed state.⁶⁸ This opportunity was spoiled by an unforeseen event—the attacks of September 11, 2001. This external threat drove Washington to double down on its relationship with Pakistan, a decision driven once again by American response to threats which resulted in long-term implications for its relationship with India.

There are signs that the United States has begun another march towards opportunity in the development of a strategy which leverages relationships to manage regional challenges.⁶⁹ President Barack Obama continued these efforts with his visit to India for its Republic Day celebration and offered public support for India's pursuit of a permanent seat at the UNSC.⁷⁰ President Obama's efforts led to the signing of the 2015 Framework for the U.S.-India Defense Relationship and the Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, which set the foundation for a decade of defense cooperation.⁷¹ Another step on the path to an alliance was the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016 which provides for reciprocal military logistics support between India and the United States.⁷² The establishment of India as a major defense partner in the 2017 U.S. National Defense Authorization Act places the relationship in a separate category from Pakistan's designation as a major non-NATO ally, and is seen as a level of commitment and trust beyond that bestowed on Pakistan.⁷³ The U.S. National Security Advisor, H. R. McMaster, reaffirmed India's

“designation as a major defense partner”⁷⁴ which Secretary of Defense James Mattis followed by directing the DoD to “...strengthen alliances and attract new partners.”⁷⁵

Beyond formal defense agreements, senior U.S. officials are signaling increasing expectations of the relationship with India.⁷⁶ President Trump and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson have commented extensively regarding the change in U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and the increased emphasis given to U.S.-Indo relations. In an August 2017 Afghan policy speech, President Trump acknowledged India’s regional role by calling on India to bolster its “...economic assistance and development...”⁷⁷ to Afghanistan. Likewise, in October of 2017, Secretary Tillerson highlighted U.S.-Indo defense cooperation, growing economic opportunities, culture, and shared democratic values as ties that bind the two countries together.⁷⁸ The cumulative effects of these actions point directly at the future center of gravity for U.S. influence in Asia: India.

An alliance with India would fill a shortfall in the U.S. regional portfolio: a powerful and reliable ally in Asia. Bringing India firmly into the U.S. sphere of influence could help both parties. For the United States, a relationship with India furthers the economic and social development of Afghanistan—nation building tasks which Indian soft power is particularly suited to pursue. A formal relationship with India distances the United States from Pakistan, a country which has failed to live up to its expectations as a major Non-NATO ally and for India, an alliance would provide a deterrence to future Pakistani regional aggression. The expansion of U.S.-Indian economic cooperation will diversify manufacturing and import options for the United States which is heavily reliant upon China. For India, U.S. investment will further boost the growing economy and provide the means to build a robust middle class. Improved defense relations with India will also

reduce Russian influence in Asia. Russia backs the Chinese OBOR and CPEC initiatives and could play the spoiler in Afghanistan as well as in future conflicts where U.S. national interests are at stake.

Building a Stronger India

The consummation of an improved U.S.- Indo relationship is not foretold. A partnership which values democracy and rule of law and built on a bedrock of defense cooperation provides a reason for optimism.⁷⁹ The improvement of this relationship requires that the United States leverage existing military relations paired with determined diplomatic and economic engagement with India. American domestic issues such as budget inconsistencies and sequestration influence India's perception of the United States as a reliable partner. Amid continued American budget difficulties, some in India are questioning whether or not the United States can meet its obligations in Afghanistan, put adequate pressure on Pakistan, and extend its reach to complete the Pacific Pivot begun under President Obama.⁸⁰ The United States must approach this effort with a clear vision for creating an enduring ally by helping to build a stronger India.

India is a complicated partner for a western nation to approach. India's regional relationships require deft regional realism and careful international diplomacy which does not allow an intervening international event to spoil the culmination of this effort. The United States must manage its disputes with Iran in a manner which does not jeopardize India's national security interests and requires India and Iran to walk a fine diplomatic line. An improved relationship will require tolerance of India's relationship with Iran, a firm approach to its provocative neighbor Pakistan, and an appreciation for the strategic distrust which defines its relationship with China.

Beginning with deliberate diplomatic efforts, the United States must place India apart from other Asian actors. As highlighted in the Indo-Afghan SPA, a permanent seat on the UN Security Council (UNSC) is high on India's priority list.⁸¹ President Obama voiced support for India obtaining a seat on the UNSC and revisiting this issue formally in the UN—even if unsuccessful—would bolster Indian stature on the global stage.⁸² Importantly, it would send a clear message to Pakistan and China regarding democratic values in the furtherance of the international system. Additionally, it would provide India equal footing with China on the UNSC, a position which could bolster U.S. efforts to steer China towards peaceful growth.

A stable and secure Afghanistan is central to India's access to economic markets of Central Asia, thus sustaining their own growth and allowing them to compete with China. India's interests in Afghanistan are dictated by the tyranny of geography; for India, all roads to Afghanistan lead through the Iranian port of Charbahar. Indian expansion into the Afghan market via Iran is a potential windfall for all three countries. Afghanistan's economy is almost exclusively dependent upon Pakistan for access to the sea. Pakistan, using brute economic coercion to punish both its weaker Afghan neighbor and its fair-weather American ally, has repeatedly closed the Afghan border and fully denied India transit rights to Afghanistan for trade.⁸³ Charbahar promises Afghanistan an alternative route to the sea by insulating it from Pakistani economic reprisals and empowering it to leverage economics in its own interests.

Militarily, the United States must pursue a vigorous expansion of arms sales to India. India fields the world's second largest military⁸⁴ and is positioned to become the third largest defense spender.⁸⁵ India's demand for military hardware outstrips its

domestic production capacity, thus making it the world's leading purchaser of Russian equipment.⁸⁶ The Department of State must quietly encourage India to move away from Russia militarily based on principled democratic ideas and the divergence of Indo-Russian interests in the region, specifically in Afghanistan where Russian overtures to the Taliban have raised concern in New Delhi.⁸⁷ The DoD and U.S. defense industry must continue to provide alternative defense articles which are qualitatively better options for Indian defense. Since 2008 India has secured over \$10 billion in U.S. defense contracts, a marked increase over the \$500 million in total purchases in all previous years combined.⁸⁸ It is in the enduring national interest of the United States to minimize the presence of Russian military equipment, and thereby their influence, in South Asia.

Moving forward the United States should seek to deepen military relations with India. The two countries have well established maritime cooperation—as demonstrated by the Malabar Naval Exercise now in its twenty-first year—which has also included Japan and Australia.⁸⁹ Building upon this foundation, the United States must develop air and land exchanges and exercises. Humanitarian operations would be a particularly beneficial place for the two countries to start, thus improving relationships, safety, and military interoperability. Additionally, the United States should encourage India to further partner with the ANDSF in support of the RSMA train-advise-assist mission. Indo-Afghan relations are strong and mutually beneficial. Increasing positive bilateral relations with GIRoA furthers Kabul's legitimacy and increases the likelihood of a positive outcome.

Enabling continued Indian economic growth is central to the success of any future U.S.-Indo relations. Increasing trade is essential to improving the Indian economy and lifting millions of India's citizens into the middle class where a life of economic stability changes their political calculus and shifts the daily concerns of Indian citizens from survival to inclusion in the international system. There are already indications that the growth of India's middle class can drive this sort of change. Prime Minister Narendra Modi led India into an increasing role internationally after the success of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) which came to power in part from a growth in India's middle class and a rising tide of nationalism which fed a desire among Indians to be seen as, and to have, partners in an increasingly complicated Asian security environment.⁹⁰

Conclusion

As India's power grows, its pragmatic and idealistic approach of non-alignment is yielding to its expansive national security interests. Since gaining its independence India has modified its approach to foreign policy by moving through periods of non-alignment,⁹¹ strategic autonomy,⁹² multi-alignment,⁹³ and now a new approach known as neo-Curzonian Foreign Policy.⁹⁴ This new Indian policy is represented by increased security cooperation with Japan, Australia, and the United States.⁹⁵ India's clear-eyed emphasis on revitalizing its economy while deepening its regional ties reflects this new reality.⁹⁶

Moving India—a state which has long protected its non-aligned status—into an alliance with the United States will not be easy. There are, however, signals that India is ready to take the next step in the evolution of its foreign policy. India's progressive Prime Minister, Modi, is rapidly moving India forward by making great changes in both India's economic and foreign policy with an eye towards a rapid and decisive increase in

India's military prowess. India's use of bilateral SPAs demonstrates a realist approach, consistent with Kautilyan concepts of international relations and congruent with the formation of alliances in an anarchic system. In 2015 India, Japan, and the United States participated in the first ever trilateral ministerial meetings.⁹⁷ India is openly discussing the concept of a quadrilateral security cooperation agreement with the United States, Japan, and Australia, an action that would have been inconceivable a decade ago but which today is even directly mentioned in the American National Security Strategy.⁹⁸

For India, and Asia, the world has changed. India's previous policies of non-alignment and strategic independence saw it through multiple conflicts with Pakistan and China. Today, however, these Indian adversaries are now nuclear powers and effectively aligned; consequently, future conflicts may require a different approach.⁹⁹ India's increased participation in international counter-terrorism and counter-proliferation activities as well as their increased interest in regional security cooperation and humanitarian assistance operations demonstrate their recognition of the changing environment.¹⁰⁰

America needs a partner in South Asia, and India is the partner of choice. Afghanistan is the inflection point in America's South Asian Policy, and India is poised to facilitate American leadership. Through a robust engagement of military, diplomatic, and economic lines of effort, the United States is in a position to become India's primary defense acquisitions partner. This defense relationship can improve India's domestic capability and offset Russian influence across South Asia. A strong and U.S.-aligned

India will encourage Pakistani compliance with international norms and steer China towards a path of peaceful prosperity.

The United States must break its reactive approach to South Asian policy and look for opportunity.¹⁰¹ Securing a bilateral security agreement with India is the next logical next step for the United States. Once U.S.-Indo relations are cemented, America will be positioned to become the hub of a quadrilateral security agreement with India, Japan, and Australia. Opportunity rests with the world's largest democracy, a regional hegemon with untapped economic potential and a rapidly growing defense force which needs a reliable partner. Moreover, opportunity also presents itself for America to advance its interests in South Asia while securing an enduring strategic alliance with India as it becomes a larger player in the international system.

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