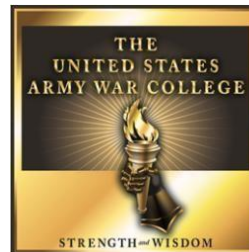


## U.S. and India Military Relations: Aligned not Bound

by

Lieutenant Colonel Matthew R. Nation  
United States Marine Corps

Under the Direction of:  
Colonel Tarn D. Warren



United States Army War College  
Class of 2016

### DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT: A

Approved for Public Release  
Distribution is Unlimited

The views expressed herein are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the Department of the Army, Department of Defense, or the U.S. Government. The U.S. Army War College is accredited by the Commission on Higher Education of the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, an institutional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation.

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			Form Approved--OMB No. 0704-0188		
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 01-04-2016		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE U.S. and India Military Relations: Aligned not Bound			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Matthew R. Nation United States Marine Corps			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Tarn D. Warren			8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College, 122 Forbes Avenue, Carlisle, PA 17013			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited. Please consider submitting to DTIC for worldwide availability? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (student check one) Project Adviser recommends DTIC submission? YES: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> or NO: <input type="checkbox"/> (PA check one)					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 6461					
14. ABSTRACT In 2012, the United States announced its Rebalance to the Pacific, creating a new focus on Asian security for U.S. policy makers. From ensuring universal access to the global commons, to managing China's responsible growth, Washington requires a long-term strategic partner to share the burden and India is at the top of the list. India, a democratic nuclear power and home to a fifth of the world's population, is looking east to forge partnerships to further its own economic and security interests. The U.S. and India have a spotty history together that warrants analysis, but since the turn of the century, more areas of convergence than divergence exist between them. With progressive leadership in both nations setting conditions for further meaningful relations, established military ties between the U.S. and India provide an optimal platform to advance mutual interests. With India's long-standing policy of non-alignment as a backdrop, India must increase its role as a security provider. These former British colonies must work together to compliment each other's policies to maintain a strategic equilibrium in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia regions.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Management of Global Commons, Converging Interests, Pakistan, China, Non Alignment					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 30	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (w/ area code)

## U.S. and India Military Relations: Aligned not Bound

(6461 words)

### Abstract

In 2012, the United States announced its Rebalance to the Pacific, creating a new focus on Asian security for U.S. policy makers. From ensuring universal access to the global commons, to managing China's responsible growth, Washington requires a long-term strategic partner to share the burden and India is at the top of the list. India, a democratic nuclear power and home to a fifth of the world's population, is looking east to forge partnerships to further its own economic and security interests. The U.S. and India have a spotty history together that warrants analysis, but since the turn of the century, more areas of convergence than divergence exist between them. With progressive leadership in both nations setting conditions for further meaningful relations, established military ties between the U.S. and India provide an optimal platform to advance mutual interests. With India's long-standing policy of non-alignment as a backdrop, India must increase its role as a security provider. These former British colonies must work together to compliment each other's policies to maintain a strategic equilibrium in the Indian Ocean and South East Asia regions.

## **U.S. and India Military Relations: Aligned not Bound**

Since 2012, the Indian Ocean region (IOR) has received significant attention as the United States conducted its strategic rebalance to Asia and the Pacific following the cessation of major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The stated purpose of this renewed focus on the region is to oversee regional stability for the U.S., its allies and partners, and to ensure freedom of navigation and over-flight throughout the region. The rebalance has highlighted the importance of United States Pacific Command (USPACOM), specifically in the arenas of security and stability, and the conduct of "Phase 0" peacetime exercises and operations.<sup>1</sup>

As the preeminent indigenous power seeking access to western technology as well as foreign investment, India is a critical partner in sustaining a strategic equilibrium in East Asia and the IOR. India and the U.S. share mutual security interests and relations between the two countries have steadily improved since the turn of the century starting under President George W. Bush.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, U.S.-India defense engagement and cooperation have continued to increase over the past 15 years, with military to military engagement resulting in meaningful relationships and enhanced interoperability between India, the U.S., and other key Asian nations. However, although several countries have signed binding security treaties with the U.S., including Japan, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and Australia, India has remained a strategic partner.<sup>3</sup> Whether the next chapter in U.S.-Indo relations becomes a formal alliance or continued partnership will be explored further in this article, but the bottom line is clear: The U.S. and India must expand the scope of military to military engagement over the next five years to enhance our strategic relationship, which is central to wider stability in the IOR.

This paper will evaluate modern U.S.-India relations to provide historical and geographical contexts, a synopsis and analysis of the stated/actual foreign policies of each nation, and a brief overview of China's influence on the region. This paper will analyze military aspects relevant to the region, and discuss converging and diverging interests of both the United States and India. In addition, it will provide recommendations for an ideal combined strategy focused on increasing capacity that should be immediately implemented against the backdrop of India's non-aligned status, and describe the effects on actual policy execution in relation to other significant actors in the region. Finally, this paper will evaluate the feasibility of a formal U.S.-India alliance as both nations seek to enhance India's military interoperability with security partners as well as bolster New Delhi's international legitimacy as a regional player with global economic and security implications.

A key element of American foreign policy in Asia is to support development, democracy, and ensure access to the global commons. Central to this strategy is the close monitoring of an increasingly assertive China with its rapid expansion following decades of economic growth, and ensuring our relationship remains one of healthy competition vice confrontation.<sup>4</sup> From its aggressive behavior in the East and South China Seas to the development of sea denial platforms and a robust naval force projection, China is clearly posturing to deny the U.S. and others freedom of maneuver in its ever-increasing sphere of influence.<sup>5</sup> Complicating matters is the evolution of the wary India-China relationship that spans centuries and experienced direct conflict in 1962, with Tibet and ongoing border disputes that are still unresolved.<sup>6</sup> In keeping with India's long-standing policy of non-alignment and its own requirement for unfettered

access to sustain its burgeoning economy, it is in India's long term national interest to execute a foreign policy based on mutual interest and cooperation with all nations in the IOR. As one of the most powerful nations in the region, it is fitting that an Asian country serves as a primary counterbalance to China's incredible rise and to offset the global perception of a U.S.–China struggle for regional hegemony.

The maritime balance of power is up for grabs as the U.S., India and China emerge as the most influential stakeholders in the IOR and South Pacific. With this resurgence of great power competition, security and economic interests are at stake. As the world's largest democracy with almost a fifth of the world's population and a continent with almost 4,400 miles of coastline on both the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, peninsular India is uniquely positioned to play a vital role in the long term stability of the region.<sup>7</sup> The Indian Ocean connects East Asia with Europe, the Middle East, and serves as a vital economic and military line of communication with the North and South American continents. In addition, the Suez Canal, Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and Bab-el Mandeb are critical waterways connected to the IOR that must be kept open in order to ensure global economic viability.<sup>8</sup> A growing convergence of the financial interests between the U.S. and India were underscored by an increase in trade from \$25 billion to over \$100 billion in the period of 2003 to 2013 and is likely to continue to grow if security conditions and subsequent trade routes remain unmolested.<sup>9</sup>

India is critical to the success of this U.S. rebalance to Asia, and Washington is keen to recognize New Delhi's significant geopolitical role. America's commitment to stability includes the use of all elements of national power, and in addition to continuous

(and increasing) trade of goods and services in the commercial sector, diplomatic and military efforts have been the most pronounced between the U.S. and India. During President Barack Obama's visit to India on 8 November 2010, he stated, "For in Asia and around the world, India is not simply emerging; India has emerged. And it is my firm belief that the relationship between the United States and India-bound by our shared interests and our shared values - will be one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century."<sup>10</sup>

While India has quite literally been part of the landscape for thousands of years, it is the U.S. that has been reminded by recent activity in the region that there is an emergent requirement for a strong, long lasting partner to hedge against China's strategic rise currently underway. The complicated, interactive relationship between these three nations demands that the U.S. proceed with the rebalance in such a way as to maintain the status quo in the region and encourage states to resolve disputes without adversarial relations and resorting to force. Underscoring our aligned interests, perceived threats, and similar styles of government, Presidents Bush and Obama have set the conditions for progress by courting the Indian leadership and each country's respective domestic audiences. With 70 percent of the world's crude and other oil products as well as 50 percent of all shipping containers crossing through the IOR, it is a global imperative that the Indian Ocean sea lines of communication (SLOCs) remain open.<sup>11</sup>

Given the dynamic nature of the region and apprehension on all sides regarding China's intentions, India can ill afford to hedge cautiously on the sidelines, hiding behind its non-aligned status as the operating environment develops around it.<sup>12</sup> India must

actively participate to shoulder more burden in maintaining the global commons it enjoys to promote economic growth, security, and prosperity in the region. Given the relatively rapid development of Chinese and Indian blue-water naval capabilities combined with the aforementioned criticality of the trade routes, any issues are likely to play out on the high seas vice on the large Asian continent. Understandably, India has historically shied away from conducting "constabulary duties" in the Indian Ocean out of concern for being seen as allied with the U.S., but New Delhi should recalibrate its level of participation in providing security.

India will play an active role in the U.S. rebalance if Washington can create a mutually beneficial political environment and close a lingering trust deficit through continued non-committal and non-threatening interaction in the eyes of its neighbors in the IOR.<sup>13</sup> Undoubtedly, the U.S. requires a partner to carry out its own security commitments in the IOR as a hedge against a rising and increasingly aggressive China. With the right political leadership currently in place in both countries, now is the time for action - the iron is hot and conditions are set.

India's relationship with the U.S. can be separated into four distinct phases. Upon gaining independence from Britain on 15 August 1947 and becoming a sovereign democratic republic, India maintained a policy of strategic non-alignment throughout most of the Cold War and avoided forging an alliance with either of the two super powers.<sup>14</sup> The second phase began following India's defeat during the Indo-China war of 1962. As a relatively new nation with aspirations to be a global player and following its humiliation at the hands of China, India looked to the U.S. in order to modernize its military capabilities. Likely due to its non-aligned status, and with the U.S. favoring anti-



communist Pakistan, India received no meaningful support from the U.S. and subsequently entered a defense cooperation agreement with the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) in 1971 and began an era of estrangement from the West.

The U.S. was seen as largely indifferent to this arrangement and India long remained a “Soviet protégé,” finding shelter under the tutelage of the USSR.<sup>15</sup> India was forced to look elsewhere for partners after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991 and China began its ascent. The third phase began with India’s May 1998 nuclear test, which created significant tension in the region. China strongly condemned the tests, as well as the ensuing nuclear tests carried out by rival Pakistan. The Clinton administration quickly advocated for the implementation of sanctions against India in an effort to diffuse this diplomatic crisis, which further deepened the trust deficit and apprehension of both nations.<sup>16</sup> The fourth phase of the U.S.-India relationship was ushered in by President George W. Bush. Shortly after Bush took office, combined military exercises between India and the U.S. increased. He developed and implemented the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership in 2005, which established a joint defense framework and the historic 2008 bilateral civilian nuclear agreement. President Barack Obama has personally continued this senior leader engagement through several high visibility visits to the continent; these actions have shown the Indian people that our mutual interests will keep the attention of American leadership for the foreseeable future.<sup>17</sup>

## Policy Overview

### India

Prime Minister Narasimha Rao created India’s Look East policy in the early 1990s to advance Indian interests around the globe. The successive administrations of Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh furthered this policy and it continues as of

this writing to focus specifically on India and East Asia issues. This foreign policy formulation strategy was originally devised in contrast to India's Cold War-era policies and invested in relationships based on economic and commercial links, as well as regional cultural and ideological links.<sup>18</sup> This successful approach has continued with a renewed focus and trajectory on a path to sustain growth and foster security for the greater good of its citizens. In order to reach its full potential, India will require global partners to extend its legitimate influence. An alternative to communist China, the U.S. is the nation that can assist in access to global markets and recognition on the world stage. As India pursues these national interests, the May 2014 election of Narendra Modi of the Bharatiya Janata Party as Prime Minister has resulted in increased Indian nationalism and a willingness to work more closely with the U.S. while being acutely aware of international perception of Indian policy around the globe.<sup>19</sup>

Defense is the critical link in the Look East policy to enable economic and political interests, and to ensure Indian credibility for Asia. China is much too large and rapidly strengthening its position in the region to go uncontested. It should at least be viewed with some level of apprehension by states in the IOR. India, as the largest nation in the region with a strong military (though no match for China on its own), is a natural partner to countries such as Vietnam, Japan, and South Korea due to geography and similar interests.<sup>20</sup> Understandably, India would prefer to be the sole orchestrator for a "concert of power" with the cast of players in the IOR. An ideal hedging strategy for India is one where the U.S. would be one of many players contributing to security in the waters of Asia, but it remains to be seen if India has the required means to realize that goal.<sup>21</sup> The Indian Navy is working diligently to increase

its operational capabilities requisite for a blue water navy and land attack assets, and it is seeking to expand the role of multi-national exercises with Asian nations, including Japan and Vietnam. By 2017 the Indian Naval Ship Vikrant should be operational and deployed, adding a second carrier to the Indian fleet.<sup>22</sup>

Historically a traditional land power given its geography, India has been steadily increasing its naval capabilities in recognition of the geopolitical environment that warrants such a focus. The Indian Navy clearly has high aspirations, considering its build up of surface and air power projection capabilities, vice a fleet of short-range vessels augmented with limited naval-aviation assets. Even prior to Prime Minister Modi's tenure, Indian maritime reach in the IOR and greater Asia-Pacific was noted in comments made by Indian officials. Former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sureesh Mehta suggested in 2008 that, "[the Indian Navy's area of] interest is not restricted to the Indian Ocean."<sup>23</sup> In an effort to increase its operational maritime prowess in proportion to its material acquisitions, India has conducted several annual exercises with U.S. forces with a focus on complex naval maneuvers. Its operational portfolio includes carrier operations, amphibious landings, and several aviation exercises, which have measurably increased its ability to effectively command and control forces in the air, sea and land.<sup>24</sup>

The Malabar series of exercises began in 1992, and after a brief pause due to the commitment of U.S. forces engaged in the Middle East, continued up through Malabar 2015. This Malabar exercise, conducted in October of 2015, included Japan, making the series a permanent and formally structured trilateral engagement. This development did not go unnoticed by China and clearly underscores the advancement

of U.S.-India relations and India's openness to working closely with, and more importantly, placing it on equal footing with the world's sole super power.<sup>25</sup> The increasingly pragmatic policies of Modi's leadership show that India's strategic focus is in the right place. The actions of other nations will however, influence whether India maintains its policy of strategic autonomy.

### United States

As the world's largest democracies, Washington's and New Delhi's objectives and interests are compatible. India's Look East policy naturally aligns with and complements the U.S. rebalance. Both countries embrace free market economics, free trade, representative democratic government, and see themselves as part of a greater international community. Non-alignment by nature forces larger powers to court those non-aligned nations for their loyalty through partnerships, possibly offering an alternative based on shared values and interests.<sup>26</sup> Both nations view growing Chinese expansion and influence with concern, though Beijing is certainly not the only issue facing the region; North Korea, Pakistan, terrorism, piracy, and the need to prepare for humanitarian crises also present significant challenges to the region.<sup>27</sup> The U.S. has taken action in the form of the aforementioned strategic rebalance to Asia and the Pacific to continue partnerships with ideologically similar nations. In order to meet the President's intent in light of the changing security environment, the Department of Defense has positioned more forces in the USPACOM area of responsibility (AOR) than in U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM).<sup>28</sup>

Partner nation capacity building will be increasingly essential in the Asia Pacific region as nations vie for limited resources, and it is a key tenet of the U.S. role as the "offshore balancer" to potential challengers of stability. In addition to conducting

exercises with India and other countries, the U.S. has undertaken meaningful initiatives to bolster military to military relations and build capacity. The India-U.S. Defense Relationship, originally signed in 2005, was renewed in June of 2015, which underscores defense cooperation and future technologies to be employed by each country. Yet in its current form, it does not appear that this will lead to drastic change. Highlighting issues such as defeating violent extremism, countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the protection of the free flow of commerce through the next ten years, the document was more of a declaration of intent than a descriptive roadmap. Both the U.S. Secretary of Defense and the Indian Minister of Defense signed the document. Notably, both signed copies were in English.<sup>29</sup>

Another relevant document is the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI). Similar to the “Make In India” initiative of the Modi government, DTTI is a commitment mechanism that seeks to facilitate co-production and co-development of defense systems while streamlining processes to bring select systems quickly to modernize Indian military forces.<sup>30</sup> This power balancing strategy of partnering with legitimate democratic (not to mention nuclear) powers is effective in a resource-constrained environment; and in the context of India, serves to assist in its development, while not holding the U.S. to an additional binding security agreement. The U.S. understands that Indian military and economic power is inherently more trustworthy and considered safer than the autocratic communist Chinese and is partnering accordingly.<sup>31</sup>

## China

China is the 800-pound dragon in the room. Its behavior is a common concern that must be considered against the milieu of the U.S. and Indian foreign policies,

particularly regarding the subject of formal alliances. In an effort to support its rapidly growing economy with an insatiable thirst for energy, Beijing is forging ties with several nations, enabled by the “String of Pearls” policy to gain influence throughout the region.<sup>32</sup> For example, its development of port facilities and other infrastructure in the region, coupled with burgeoning relations with Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan are perceived by many in New Delhi as an effort to contain India and counter its abilities.<sup>33</sup> Though China has acquired impressive naval technology, its weakness lies in its ability to project and sustain power globally, and its actions go a long way in furthering that impression.<sup>34</sup>

However, in order to maintain balance, Washington should recognize China’s legitimate interests in the global economy and continue to support its partners. India too must take into account the protestations of China concerning the myriad multilateral naval exercises. Indeed, at times India has adjusted its military exercise schedule to assuage China’s concerns. Whether China’s increased engagement in the region is strictly economic or if it is setting its own conditions for the theater for less harmonious purposes remains to be seen, but this long-term strategy of force projection has the potential to nudge the U.S. and India closer to an alliance.<sup>35</sup>

#### American and Indian Interests in a Dynamic Asia Pacific

Successful implementation of both the U.S. rebalance and the Indian Look East policy will require an expanded strategic relationship to ensure each nation contributes responsibly to the shared goal of a stable maritime Asia. Though a comprehensive (ideal) strategy will require a whole of government approach on the part of both countries, the existing military relationship is an area where converging interests will continue to underscore U.S.-India alignment. Conversely, working closely toward a

better understanding of diverging interests may at least lead to cooperation, if not alignment.

The primary area of convergence between the U.S. and India is the central theme of this paper: developing a combined strategy that provides a secure and stable IOR and unfettered access to the SLOCs. As it relates to the balance of power in the IOR, India should rightly play a larger role as a security provider. A sound U.S.-India strategy will focus on supporting Indian self-reliance in the Indian Ocean and even closer military cooperation with the U.S. Although it possesses a military of 1.3 million troops, India necessarily requires a stronger, more advanced navy with an expanded reach to meet the challenge posed by China and other actors in the region.<sup>36</sup>

Several areas of military cooperation must be adopted in order to build capacity and enhance interoperability. First, the U.S. should dramatically increase the size and scope of theater security cooperation (TSC) engagement with India with a focus on the projection of surface and air power from the maritime domain. Second, the U.S. Navy should expand port calls in India, to include Marine expeditionary units (MEU). MEUs bring unique capabilities and provide scalable training options for partnered forces on air, land, and sea. India's vast coastline and access to the surrounding littorals make this an imperative from the tactical to the strategic level, and units and personnel at each level will benefit from the experience of U.S. forces.

The addition of a second aircraft carrier in 2017 will contribute immensely to Indian capabilities, but will require specialized training to hone deck operations; airspace management and anti-air operations; and to integrate amphibious capabilities, manage command and control, and enable the sustainment of forces afloat to achieve

synergy.<sup>37</sup> The Malabar and Rim Of the Pacific series of exercises have been immensely successful and the U.S. should expand them with India in the lead. Presently India cannot match, let alone overcome, China's naval acumen; and absent the U.S., it would require augmentation from nations such as Vietnam, the Philippines and Japan to effectively counter potential aggression.

An outcome of these joint and combined exercises will result in an extended Indian reach. This reach will be a major factor in India's ability to assist in the patrolling of critical waterways as far away as the Strait of Malacca, where its reach is currently limited.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, a greater leadership role on the part of India, as well as the technical proficiency needed to take such a step is warranted to facilitate continued cooperation with other regional players. In fact, Prime Minister Modi remarked during a 2014 speech, "greater uncertainty in the area will require greater responsibility from Japan and India."<sup>39</sup> For his part, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, also a strong nationalist, has made strides in his government to take a larger role in the region, and Japan's recent upswing in participation in regional military exercises further reinforces indigenous hard power in the region without the symbolism of the U.S. always in the lead.<sup>40</sup> Logically, India should assume the role its neighbors expect of a strong regional power.

With such an uptick in military activity by India and other partners, domestic and international audiences will surely take notice. In fact, an increased U.S. presence and training role with India will exacerbate tensions with China and Pakistan, be seen by them as containment, and will run counter to India's non-alignment policy. Pakistan, India's nemesis, must be reassured by the U.S. that democratic nations with similar



interests will necessarily cooperate. Understandably, China must support its economy and cannot be tied solely to the South China Sea. Therefore, all nations have a vested interest in keeping the IOR from becoming a battlefield for dominance.

However, India must continue to "season" its maritime force through exposure to other militaries and cultures to glean best practices and enhance interoperability. The United States is the ideal partner to facilitate India's military acumen, given the two nations' established ties. Far from simply setting up a small arms range in Iraq or Afghanistan, large scale joint exercises in multiple domains and the ability to sustain forces forward are the strengths of the U.S. military. From the employment of jointly-developed technology through the DTTI, to increased interaction with foreign personnel and cultures, both nations will benefit from this exposure. After over a decade of conducting extensive work-ups for combined arms operations in combat, U.S. personnel are well suited to provide integrated training and receive feedback. A well-rounded, professional force must constantly evaluate its performance and India would benefit from routine assessments. An isolated military, such as the Chinese People's Liberation Army, lacks the ability to comparatively assess its performance against a peer force prior to any potential hostilities. Non-alignment does not have to equate to isolation. India and the U.S. would benefit from increased interaction, but Washington must continue to reassure New Delhi those military capability assessments, after action reports, etc. will be kept from potential adversaries.<sup>41</sup>

The second area of convergence where cooperation will strengthen U.S.-India interoperability is counter terrorism (CT) operations. In the last decade, both nations were attacked by transnational terrorist organizations and suffered massive civilian

casualties. The September 11, 2001 attacks and the Mumbai mass shooting on November 26, 2008, highlight the threat that Islamist terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda and the Taliban pose to both countries' democratic values and way of life. In the Mumbai case, Indian investigators identified that the Pakistan-based militant group, Lashkar-e-Tayiba (LeT), took advantage of security gaps, porous borders, coastline, and poorly trained and equipped first responders to carry out the attack.<sup>42</sup>

Since 2008, dozens of deadly attacks have been carried out in India, with blame being placed on domestic groups as well as LeT and other Pakistani organizations, though the government itself was the subject of public outrage for its inability to identify several deadly attacks in late 2011. In addition, the U.S. refusal to grant access to Mumbai suspect David Headley (an American) for almost nine months, coupled with a failure to prosecute Pakistani intelligence officers that were allegedly involved, did not serve to build trust.<sup>43</sup> Although the U.S. and India cooperate on numerous issues such as nuclear non-proliferation, trade, and military engagement, more must be done to share tactics, techniques, procedures and intelligence to protect their respective populations.

Third, as part of an expanded, comprehensive TSC plan, the U.S. should increase the amount of CT collaboration with India, including training in direct action operations, site exploitation, and investigations. Exercise YUDH ABHYAS, a counter insurgency and anti-terror training event focused on infantry operations in all terrains, began in 2004 as a platoon-level exercise and increased to the battalion level in 2008.<sup>44</sup> This exercise should be expanded and integrated into the MALABAR series of exercises to enhance the joint capabilities of the Indian Army and Navy. The U.S. has

deployed Special Forces troops to India as recently as October 2015 to work closely with the Indian National Security Guard (NSG) with the expressed goal of improving U.S.-India interoperability to conduct combined raids.<sup>45</sup> While this produces excellent partnering optics and concurrently allows India to capitalize on its soft power, the Indian military must also focus on operating jointly to maximize efficiency and break away from its continentalist history as a land-centric force. In addition to focusing on land-based operations, U.S. and India should exchange best practices in an effort to combat piracy as part of their national strategy.

Given India's vast coastline and requirement to patrol the littoral areas, such exercises will serve as forcing functions for coordination between the services. While the U.S. military can assist in direct action training, joint operations and interagency integration, U.S. law enforcement agencies will also be required to provide relevant expertise in the areas of civilian law enforcement investigations to complement these efforts. Improving both the operational and investigative capabilities will bolster India's resolve and highlight New Delhi's soft and hard power.

Given the long and colored history India has with Pakistan, any increased U.S. troop presence and interaction with India for the purpose of counter terrorism is surely to draw protests from Islamabad. The two nuclear-armed nations share an expansive land border and are engaged in an ongoing conflict over the state of Jammu and Kashmir that has raged since 1947.<sup>46</sup> Their continued relationships with the U.S. are complicating the situation for both sides, though Washington has never taken a position on the territorial disputes and has acted only in relation to its specific interests in each country. Nonetheless, as India becomes more effective in CT operations and

conducting arrests, possibly implicating more Pakistanis (civilian or otherwise); their seemingly irreconcilable past will continue to manifest itself.

As a responsible neighbor that must protect its citizens from threats inside and outside its borders, India must partner with those countries that serve its interests. Whether working with the U.S. in building capacity or purchasing certain military equipment from Russia, India's primary obligation is its ability to defend itself and then to foster its rise as an effective regional security provider.<sup>47</sup>

Fourth, humanitarian aid and disaster relief (HADR) is an area with which the U.S. and India have considerable experience, and one that serves as a legitimate avenue to increase maritime interoperability. While generally not directly related to the use of force, HADR operations require capabilities that are uniquely suited to the military due to the availability of transportation assets, deployable communications architecture, and command and control. In the case of the U.S., the forward deployed nature of its forces throughout the IOR and South East Asia region make them ideally suited to partner with regional militaries such as India.

From deliberate planning to crisis response in an area prone to tsunamis, earthquakes, and other disasters, it is imperative that nations such as India, the U.S., Australia, and Japan maintain the ability to execute joint missions like the 2004 Asian Tsunami relief<sup>48</sup> and the 2011 Fukushima earthquake and subsequent nuclear accident consequence management efforts.<sup>49</sup> No stranger to HADR operations, recent relief operations by the Indian Army and Air Force have set an encouraging precedent. During April 2015, India deployed C-17s and C-130Js to evacuate personnel and deliver supplies in response to the humanitarian crisis in Yemen and was the first to

respond to the earthquake in Nepal.<sup>50</sup> Interestingly, of the 15 missions assigned to the Navy in the 2009 Indian Maritime Doctrine, disaster management and humanitarian aid are nowhere to be found. Absent a cogent Indian National Security Strategy, each branch of the military operates independently based on doctrines released by each service headquarters and India would be wise to adopt a joint approach to such operations.<sup>51</sup>

The USPACOM Center For Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM) should develop and host a combined HADR training program with the Indian military to meet future challenges with India. Dedicated planning courses designed for personnel from each service should focus on crisis planning, integration of non-government organizations, best practices, as well as inter-service capabilities in joint operations. Unlike many countries in the region, English is widely spoken by Indians and will facilitate direct dialogue vice dependence on interpreters. This will mitigate possible misunderstanding commonly experienced in bilateral training. A capstone certification exercise will serve as a foundation for execution during regularly scheduled maritime military engagements. In addition to improving the ability of each nation to work together with international agencies, this will enhance interoperability and expose each country to unique national and service cultures. A welcome result of a U.S.-developed course would be an Indian curriculum to further a shared commitment to an efficient and effective response to disasters.

The continued relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan is a source of friction and apprehension for India. Though outside the scope of what can be influenced by the military alone, it certainly warrants discussion here as a significant issue for India.

Washington established closer ties with Islamabad following the September 11, 2001 attacks to gain a foothold in Afghanistan and has since stepped up CT efforts against Al Qaeda and other militant groups.<sup>52</sup> While Pakistan continues to receive American support in the form of financial aid and foreign military sales, it is questionable whether all elements of the government are pro-American. Indeed, at times relations have been strained due to Pakistan's propensity to actively work against American interests, and Washington's execution of the 2011 unilateral U.S. raid to kill Osama Bin Laden in Abbottabad without prior coordination with the Pakistani government.<sup>53</sup>

However, the access and cooperation provided by our "frienemies" in Pakistan through this arrangement are crucial to U.S. operations in Afghanistan and South Asia. Much like in the manner India maintains economic and military relations with Iran and Russia, Washington must act in accordance with its own interests.<sup>54</sup> Ironically, as a close partner to Islamabad, China may be able to assist in managing the relationship between India and Pakistan. Washington and Beijing can act as intermediaries to ensure peace between these nuclear nations through uninterrupted trade, continued military material support and foreign aid.

Of the few areas of divergence between Washington and New Delhi, trust is the most critical aspect of the relationship that must be nurtured. The U.S.-India partnership has advanced considerably since the turn of the century, but concerns linger. The U.S. relationship with Pakistan, the American exit strategy for Afghanistan and its security implications, U.S. policies toward China that are seen as either too soft or pushing India toward an alliance with Washington, and China's long term intentions for the IOR all play into New Delhi's calculus for cautious partnering.<sup>55</sup> During December 2015,

Manohar Parrikar, the Indian Minister of Defense, visited USPACOM and stated that the U.S. is the “partner of choice” for military engagements and reinforced the importance of trust building.<sup>56</sup> Clearly, the leadership in India feels that it must hedge its bets carefully. The U.S. should recognize this strategic opportunity and reciprocate through increased engagement prior to crises.

For example, the U.S. can increase its regional coordination capabilities by asking India to assign an officer to the USPACOM headquarters. This request would underscore Washington’s commitment to India and recognize it as an equal partner. Preferably, a field grade officer who has attended a U.S. war college, this individual would be well suited for assignment to the operations or plans directorate. Serving in such a critical billet to coordinate exercises, operations, and deliberate planning efforts, this officer’s cultural and technical experience would be invaluable to both sides. Fully integrated into the staff, this officer would actively campaign for Indian participation and be an adviser with a unique perspective on India and South Asian issues. As this officer continues on his career and assumes more responsibility in his service, and combined with his understanding of American culture, etc., he will become an advocate for combined interests. In turn, the U.S. should offer to assign an officer to serve in the same capacity in India. As early as 2005, the U.S. introduced the concept of assigning an Indian officer to the USPACOM staff, but neither side furthered its execution.<sup>57</sup>

This exchange proposal will present several implementing challenges for both nations. The U.S. must address the security clearance issue to keep the officer from becoming ceremonial window dressing. In addition, India will likely be concerned about

the appearance of an alliance with the U.S., as this is a privilege normally reserved for our regional allies.

However, this proposal is in line with both nations' interests to increase situational and cultural awareness, while exponentially enhancing interoperability, particularly in the maritime domain. Indeed, even though the security clearance issues will require mitigation such as compartmentalizing spaces and restricting access, the U.S. has already been successfully accomplishing this with partners in Afghanistan and Iraq. Already vetted to attend an American war college, this USPACOM billet will serve to address concerns of trust and transparency. In the 2015 U.S. National Military Strategy, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff specifically addresses the requirement to "deepen our security relationship with India," which is in keeping with President Obama's intent and a critical step for both countries.<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the U.S. should actively advocate for this exchange, which will make a positive, long-term contribution to successful combined operations.

#### Aligned or Bound?

It may seem intuitive that India should graduate from partner status and sign a binding treaty with the U.S. Based on converging interests and the significance placed on the U.S.-India relationship by their respective leaders, this idea is not far-fetched. However, an alliance is not in both countries' best interests. India's commitment to non-alignment and its inherent self-reliance and governance are intrinsic to its culture. More commonly referred to as "strategic autonomy," this will likely be a formidable obstacle and may rule out the possibility of a formal bilateral alliance with the U.S.

However, if China's behavior changes, specifically in the form of increased aggression (or a perception thereof), India may revisit its non-aligned status and



relationship with America to seek a more overt external balancing strategy.<sup>59</sup> While the vast area that comprises the USPACOM AOR can be considered an away game of sorts for Washington, strategic partners such as India and our allies must lay in the bed made by extra-regional powers, including the U.S. and China. As the U.S. rebalances its military forces worldwide to meet emerging threats in a resource- constrained environment, it does not need to hitch its defense wagon to such a large, developing nation as India, though the pursuit of mutual interests and interoperability remain vital. The lack of a formal treaty allows nations to maintain unencumbered strategic relationships and seek the most effective partners. Washington must be sensitive to the optic of trying to lure India into an alliance, but should instead give Indians the tools to reassure their neighbors that they are a better option than China as a reliable partner in crisis and to promote wider Asian security.

Washington has acknowledged that India will play a critical role in the success of its rebalance to the Pacific following decades of estranged relations. Meanwhile, assertive, fresh leadership in New Delhi is looking east for partners and assistance in modernizing its military in order to further integrating its maritime capabilities into the rest of its force. The U.S. must capitalize on the momentum of the G.W. Bush and Obama administrations' efforts to develop its strategic partnership with India to maintain stability in the IOR and surrounding SLOCs, enabling security and continued economic progress. Any more than a cursory scan of a map of the region will show that peninsular India is blessed by its geography and cursed by its neighbors.<sup>60</sup> All nations in the IOR have to recognize and accept that while they may not always agree on partners, they must look to the long term. While the rise of China and its ever-increasing presence has

the potential to destabilize the region, India and the U.S. must take the strategic high road and shape an environment of cooperation.

A South East Asia strategic equilibrium can only be maintained through increased military engagement between the U.S., India, and other nations willing to follow these nations' lead. From routine military exercises, operations and training in support of CT and anti-piracy, to relief operations, the U.S. can facilitate cementing India's position as a legitimate regional and global partner. A lasting relationship based on trust will take time and commitment to mature, but proven economic benefits provide a strong incentive. A secure Asia is a prosperous one. Regardless of treaty status, two former British colonies providing access to the global commons is a win-win situation.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Ashton B. Carter, Secretary of Defense, Pentagon remarks, Washington D.C., Sept. 28, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Burns, "America's Strategic Opportunity with India: The New U.S.-India Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* 86, no.6 (November/December 2007): 131-146.

<sup>3</sup> Bruce Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships in the Asia-Pacific Region* (Washington, DC: U.S. Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service, January 22, 2007), 14-23.

<sup>4</sup> Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 24.

<sup>5</sup> Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi, "The American 'Pivot' and the Indian Navy, It's Hedging All The Way," *Naval War College Review* 68, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 49.

<sup>6</sup> Rollie Lal, *Understanding China and India: Security Implications for the United States and the World* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 132-133.

<sup>7</sup> CIA Fact Book, "India," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html> (accessed December 15, 2015).

<sup>8</sup> CIA Fact Book, "India Geography," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/in.html> (accessed December 16, 2015).

<sup>9</sup> International Institute for Strategic Studies, "India-US Relations Acquire New Momentum," May 11, 2015, <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/strategic%20comments/sections/2015-1f4d/india-us-relations-acquire-new-momentum-a061> (accessed November 5, 2015).

<sup>10</sup> The White House, "Remarks by the President to the Joint Session of the Indian Parliament in New Delhi, India," November 8, 2010, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2010/11/08/remarks-president-joint-session-indian-parliament-new-delhi-india> (accessed November 30, 2015).

<sup>11</sup> Harsh V. Pant and Yogesh Joshi, "The American 'Pivot' and the Indian Navy, It's Hedging All The Way," *Naval War College Review* 68, no. 1 (Winter 2015): 50.

<sup>12</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Non Aligned Movement," <http://Britannica.com/topic/non-aligned-movement> (accessed 23 Nov 2015).

<sup>13</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 62-63.

<sup>14</sup> Republic of South Africa, Department of Communication and Information System, "The Non-Aligned Movement: History and Description," <http://www.nam.gov.za/background/history.htm> (accessed November 15, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Martin Sieff, *Shifting Superpowers: The Emerging Relationship between The United States, China and India* (Washington, DC: Cato Institute, 2009), 85-91.

<sup>16</sup> Lal, *Understanding China and India*, 134-135.

<sup>17</sup> Vaughn, *U.S. Strategic and Defense Relationships*, 25.

<sup>18</sup> Thongkhoolal Haokip, "India's Look East Policy: Its Evolution and Approach," *South Asian Survey* 18, no. 2 (September 2011): 239-257.

<sup>19</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "Modi's Unexpected Boost to India-U.S. Relations," *The Washington Quarterly*, Fall 2014, 93-98.

<sup>20</sup> Harsh V. Pant, "China on the Horizon: India's 'Look East' Policy Gathers Momentum," *Foreign Policy Research Institute* (Summer 2013): 458-460.

<sup>21</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 63.

<sup>22</sup> Indian Ministry of Defence, *Freedom to use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (New Delhi: Indian Ministry of Defence, 2007), 112-113.

<sup>23</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, "Dehli's Pacific Ambition: Naval Power, "Look East" and India's Emerging Influence in the Asia-Pacific," *Asian Security* 5, no. 2: 91.

<sup>24</sup> Gurpreet S. Khurana, "India-U.S. Combined Defence Exercises: An Appraisal," *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 6 (November 2008): 1051-1053.

<sup>25</sup> Abhijit Singh, "MALABAR 2015: Strategic Power Play in the Indian Ocean," *The Diplomat*, October 28, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/Malabar-2015-strategic-power-play-in-the-indian-ocean/> (accessed December 10, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> Deborah L. Hanagan, "International Order," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues, Vol. 2: National Security Policy and Strategy* (5th Ed.), ed. J. Boone Bartholomees (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 2012), 127.

<sup>27</sup> Barack H. Obama, *National Security Strategy* (Washington, DC: The White House, February 2015), 25.

<sup>28</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 48-52.

<sup>29</sup> Jim Garamone, "U.S., India Sign 10-Year Defense Framework Agreement," June 4, 2015, <http://defense.news.gov/news-article-view/article/604775> (accessed on December 2, 2015).

<sup>30</sup> Frank Kendall, "More than Just an Idea," *The Hindu*, February 25, 2015, <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/more-than-just-an-idea/article6929810.ece> (accessed December 22, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Paul D. Miller, "Five Pillars of American Grand Strategy," *Survival* 54, no. 5 (October-November 2012): 20.

<sup>32</sup> Ashay Addhi, "String of Pearls India and the Geopolitics of Chinese Foreign Policy," July 26, 2015, <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/26/string-of-pearls-india-and-the-geopolitics-of-chinese-foreign-policy/> (accessed December 8, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> Stephen Burgess, "The U.S. Pivot to Asia and Renewal of the U.S.-India Strategic Partnership," *Comparative Strategy*, July 10, 2015, 369-370.

<sup>34</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 53.

<sup>35</sup> Burgess, "The U.S. Pivot to Asia," 371.

<sup>36</sup> David W. Kearns Jr., "Toward Alliance or Ambivalence: A Theoretical Assessment of U.S.-India Relations," *India Review* 13, no. 2 (2014): 135.

<sup>37</sup> Khurana, "India-U.S. Combined Defence Exercises," 1049.

<sup>38</sup> Karl Inderfurth, "India's 'Look East' and America's 'Asia Pivot': Converging Interests," *U.S.-India Insight* 3, no. 3 (March 2013): [http://csis.informz.net/CSIS/data/images/june2013\\_wadhanichair\\_usindiainsight.pdf](http://csis.informz.net/CSIS/data/images/june2013_wadhanichair_usindiainsight.pdf) (accessed December 8, 2015)

<sup>39</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 105.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 59-64.

<sup>41</sup> Khurana, "India-U.S. Combined Defence Exercises," 1050-1054.

<sup>42</sup> "Terror in Mumbai," *The International Institute for Strategic Studies* 14, no. 10 (December 2008).

<sup>43</sup> U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade *U.S-India Counterterrorism Cooperation: Deepening the Partnership*, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., September 14, 2011, 196-202.

<sup>44</sup> Khurana, "India-U.S. Combined Defence Exercises," 1049.

<sup>45</sup> Sushant Singh, "India-U.S. Anti Terror Cooperation: For the First Time, NSG Commandos Train with U.S. Special Forces," *The Indian Express*, November 2, 2015, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-us-anti-terror-cooperation-for-the-first-time-nsg-commandos-train-with-us-special-forces/> (accessed December 8, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation?* (London: University of California Press, 2010), 1-4.

<sup>47</sup> Pant and Joshi, "The American 'Pivot'," 65.

<sup>48</sup> Duncan Currie, "Bush's India Triumph, An Overlooked Achievement," *National Review*, April 6, 2009, 22, <https://www.unz.org/Pub/NationalRev-2009apr06-00022> (accessed December 8, 2015).

<sup>49</sup> Naidu, "India and East Asia: The Look East Policy," *Perceptions* 18, no. 1 (April 2013): 64.

<sup>50</sup> BK Pandey, "Military - Disaster Relief: The Himalayan Disaster" *SP's Aviation*, May 2015, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1689304919?accountid=4444> (accessed December 29, 2015).

<sup>51</sup> Iskander Rehman, "India's Aspirational Naval Doctrine," in *The Rise of the Indian Navy* (London: Ashgate, 2012), 59-60, <http://carnegieendowment.org/2012/10/15/india-s-aspirational-naval-doctrine> (accessed December 8, 2015). The Indian Maritime Doctrine, 2015 is classified and not available at the time of this writing.

<sup>52</sup> U.S. Department of State "Office of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Fact Sheet," October 7, 2015, <http://m.state.gov/md3453.htm> (accessed on December 29, 2015).

<sup>53</sup> Miller, "Five Pillars," 17-18.

<sup>54</sup> Jaskaran Teja, "United States-India: Enhancing a Strategic Partnership," *American Foreign Policy Interests* 36, no. 183 (2014): 189-190.

<sup>55</sup> Daniel Kurtz-Phelan, "The New New Thing in U.S.-Indian Relations?" *The New York Times*, June 22, 2013, [http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/22/the-new-new-thing-in-u-s-indian-relations/?\\_r=0](http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/06/22/the-new-new-thing-in-u-s-indian-relations/?_r=0) (accessed December 8, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Shannon Tiezzi, "U.S., India Boost Security Ties in Defense Minister Visit," *The Diplomat*, December 12, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/us-india-boost-security-ties-in-defense-minister-visit/> (accessed December 20, 2015).

<sup>57</sup> "US Plans Indian Navy Liaison Officer in Pacific Command," *The Financial Express*, April 16, 2005, <http://archive.financialexpress.com/news/story/132252> (accessed December 20, 2015).

<sup>58</sup> GEN Martin Dempsey, *The National Military Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: The Pentagon, June 2015), 9, [http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015\\_National\\_Military\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Publications/2015_National_Military_Strategy.pdf) (accessed December 30, 2015).

<sup>59</sup> Kearns, "Toward Alliance or Ambivalence," 136.

<sup>60</sup> Rehman, "India's Aspirational Naval Doctrine," 55-56.