

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Improving Security Ties With India

by

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The views expressed in this academic research paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Government, the Department of Defense, or any of its agencies.

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ABSTRACT

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India has entered a new era as a rising regional power in Asia. The sub-continent lies along one of the world's most dangerous flash-points: the Kashmir Border with Pakistan and China. The long-standing crisis in the Kashmir area has the potential to destabilize the entire region. This underscores the need for US mediation between Pakistan and India, as the consequences of either a nuclear or non-nuclear war there would be disastrous for the US Global War on Terrorism.

India as a democracy with a large economic base is an increasingly important ally in the region, although rising Hindu fundamentalism does pose a danger to the secular framework of modern India. India sees itself as a dominant power in the region and shares many common goals with the United States in South Asia. These goals include:

- Managing the consequences of instability.
- Eliminating the ideological and financial sources of terrorism.
- Protecting the sea lanes of communication.
- Securing a stable and free access to energy sources/markets in the region.
- Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

The United States must make a more concerted effort to enhance relations with India to foster peace and stability in South Asia, while maintaining a balance with its neighbor, Pakistan. The purpose of this paper is to examine common US-Indian goals, India's domestic concerns that shape its foreign policy, as well as explore India's role in the South Asian region vis-à-vis its neighbors, and the evolution of US-Indian relations since independence and their impact on today's relations. This paper will also recommend options for the United States to improve its security ties with India by increasing bilateral efforts through diplomatic, informational, military and economic means.

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PREFACE

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IMPROVING SECURITY TIES WITH INDIA

A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

India sees itself as a dominant power in South Asia and shares many common goals with the United States in the region. The current relationship between the United States and India is beginning to improve based on these common goals. The post-Cold War environment and the War on Terror has allowed both countries to enter into a more meaningful dialogue with each other. However, these developments are quite recent and will require both countries to improve their understanding of where their interests converge, as well as where their interests diverge. The bilateral efforts made since President William J. Clinton's visit to India in 2000, and the significant efforts made by both countries in the War on Terror, are a framework that can be built upon to improve United States-Indian security ties. According to Yashwant Sinha, the External Affairs Minister of India, the common goals both countries share include:

- Managing the consequences of instability.
- Eliminating the ideological and financial sources of terrorism.
- Protecting the sea lanes of communication.
- Securing a stable and free access to energy sources/ markets in the region.
- Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.¹

In December 2001 and in June 2002, two key events brought India into closer focus in America's foreign policy perspective. First, Islamic fundamentalist terrorists sympathetic to Kashmiri independence movements attacked the Indian Parliament, reminding American policymakers of the horrors of September 11, 2001. Then, in late spring-summer 2002, Pakistan and India hovered at the door of war (with both belligerents capable of using nuclear weapons) over the disputed Kashmir border that has been a point of contention since 1947. Diplomatic intervention by American Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld greatly assisted in averting a war on the subcontinent.² These two key events have signaled a need for the United States to be more engaged with India in the Twenty-First Century. It is a strategic imperative that both countries adapt to the changing security environment .

How did foreign relations between the United States and India evolve to the present time? What policies should the United States pursue to better our relations and improve ties that support mutual security interests? The Cold War and India's development as a nation-state were detractors to American policymakers' attention to the dynamics of the South Asian sub-continent. However, the past ten years have seen a renewed interest in furthering relations

between India and the United States. The dynamics of the United States-India relationship are changing, and we must respond to them to ensure our mutual security.

The purpose of this paper is to examine common US-Indian goals, India's domestic concerns that shape its foreign policy, India's role in the South Asian region vis-à-vis her neighbors, and the evolution of US-Indian relations since independence and their impact on today's relations. This paper will also recommend options for the United States to improve its security ties with India by increasing bilateral efforts through diplomatic, informational, military and economic means.

INDIA: DOMESTIC CONCERNS AND REGIONAL ISSUES

Let us first look at India's domestic concerns in regards to its neighbors and the strategic landscape in the neighboring South Asian countries (See Figure 1, Map of Indian subcontinent).



FIGURE 1. MAP OF INDIAN SUBCONTINENT

India is seen as the regional superpower in South Asia. This reflects the relationship India has with surrounding countries. We will look at domestic concerns and how they shape policy, especially Indian strategic culture. Then we will look at India's neighbors in South Asia, Central Asia, the Arabian Gulf states, and Southeast Asia and India's interests with those countries.

Since independence, India's main concerns have been to develop its economy and provide strong central government to address a host of social issues. Therefore, in its recent past, India attempted to exert its influence through religious, cultural and economic ties more than it did through military ties. However, India will use military forces if it sees an issue of vital interest (such as the crisis in Kashmir or intervention in Sri Lanka). India has the world's second largest population, at 1,027,015,247 persons.³ Presently, there are about 1.4 billion people living in South Asia, 22 percent of the world's population.⁴ India is also eleventh in the world in terms of a Gross National Product of \$421 Billion. According to the noted American specialist on India, Steve Cohen, India has the world's largest volunteer military organization with over one million regular armed forces and nearly the same amount in paramilitary forces.⁵ In 1974, India detonated its first nuclear weapon in a test, affirming its place as a regional power against perceived threats from Pakistan and China.⁶ In 1998, India declared itself to be a nuclear weapons state. This declaration received a hostile reception from the West and China.⁷ In these terms alone, India is often seen as the regional hegemon by its neighbors in South Asia. Many Indians see the statement of India being a nuclear state as a qualification for great power status in South Asia.

India centers a complex subcontinent of many peoples, cultures and religions. Although Hindu culture is one of the oldest in the world, it was not widely known in the West until the late nineteenth century. Mohandas K. Gandhi, an Indian nationalist leader, became one of the greatest figures of the twentieth century for his philosophy of non-violence that led to the independence of India. Both Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru as leaders of the Indian Nationalist Congress Party became public figures known outside of India as voices urging independence.⁸ During the Second World War, India had a unique place in South Asia because it was a trade and cultural crossroads between the Middle East and Asia. India was a natural logistics center for materiel and personnel moving from West to East. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, although a staunch ally of the British government, was sympathetic to the rights of colonized peoples to determine their independence and self-rule.⁹ With a large number of Americans based in India for the war effort, plus increased trade, the United States became influential in urging the British Government to help India establish self-rule.¹⁰

In 1947, Great Britain granted independence to India. Mohandas K. Gandhi was assassinated, and Jawaharlal Nehru became Prime Minister. Pakistan was established as a separate Muslim state by Mohammed Ali Jinnah, with it being split between East (today's Bangladesh) and West Pakistan. India, although predominantly Hindu, has a large Muslim population. At partition, most Muslims elected to live in East and West Pakistan. India wanted to grow as an independent state and Nehru did not want to become embroiled in the Cold War. In fact he made India the de facto leader of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) for newly developing countries of the Third World.

India is influenced by significant domestic political considerations in formulating foreign policy. The influence of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohandas K. Gandhi and the Indian Congress Party are apparent even today. Nehru did not trust the military to exert much influence and believed in non-violence, with violence or use of force as a last resort. This has created a tradition of a lack of strategic interaction between government leaders, ministries and armed services. A disjointed "stovepipe" approach frustrates foreign governments when dealing with Indian bureaucracy. The creation of a streamlined, government interaction process to develop and implement strategy has not occurred and many countries such as the United States have to make extremely detailed coordination to affect strategy.

India has an unorthodox strategic culture in contrast to western powers. The schools of thought that dominate this culture are unique. Noted Indian scholar Kent Bajpai explained this culture during the U.S Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute's November 2002 conference "South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances": "Indian strategic culture that was dominated by the world view of its first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, is in ferment. With the end of the Cold War, at least three different streams of thinking are vying for dominance. These three schools may be called Nehruvian-ism, neo-liberalism and hyper-realism."¹¹ While all three schools have some common thought, there are stark differences between them. Nehruvians look at war as a last resort, and defer to understanding between peoples and non-violence. The neo-liberalism school looks at conflict in the international arena as a characteristic of international relations, both in the military and economic arena. They believe in using both to leverage national interests. This is in direct contrast to western views of neo-liberalism. Finally, the hyper-realists are the most pessimistic, their governing policy is threat and counter-threat, because their belief is that states will always be in conflict. Only threat and counter-threat are feasible.¹² The current evolving strategic culture allows for a pragmatic blending and application of three schools of thought as required by the situation facing India. Hyper-realism is most definitely applied with Pakistan especially in view of the

nuclear equation. Neo-liberalism is the approach taken to bargain with the United States, and finally, Nehru-vianism is used in dealing with China. The current government of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee can be considered a “right of center coalition.” The Vajpayee government even took the unprecedented step of inviting Pakistan to India for a summit in July 2001 at Agra. This was a sign of willingness of that government to adapt their strategic culture to work with Pakistan until the setbacks of fall 2001.¹³

The religions and culture of India have permeated many different countries, and it is through these mediums that India exerts great influence throughout the region. (See Figure 2,



FIGURE 2. MAP OF SOUTH ASIA AND INDIAN OCEAN

Map of South Asia and Indian Ocean, page 5). These factors have had a profound impact upon the strategic perspective of India's rulers. Jawaharlal Nehru had an elitist view of the Brahmin class as protectors of the state from outsiders, taking a strong nationalist view of India. A strong "non-aligned" view took place initially, hoping to leverage economic and cultural strengths and serve as a model for developing countries. This was seen as a necessity in the infancy of the independent state in order for it to develop economically.¹⁴

Now that we have explored the domestic considerations and strategic culture of India, we will examine its relations with its neighbors. After independence, India began to fill the void of the security and economic relationships previously provided by Great Britain as colonial ruler (the Raj) in the subcontinent area. The states of Nepal (1950), Bhutan (1949), Sikkim (1950), Sri Lanka (1954), and Myanmar (1951) were all assisted with a friendship and cooperation treaty replacing Britain's role with them. These border states were seen as falling under an Indian sphere of Influence and were brought under the economic and security umbrella of Indian friendship.¹⁵ India assumed the security role of protecting its borders in the Himalayas, but did not attempt any such agreements with Tibet out of Nehru's initial deference to China. Nehru did not trust his military initially and preferred to keep it as his domestic unrest instrument, and for the odd dispute with Pakistan.¹⁶

Although Nehru was a nationalist, his preference was for non-violence and to use military force only in extreme cases. The use of the "non-alignment" strategy by Nehru was to avoid conflict, not prepare for it or use military force as an option. His interest was to develop the nation and internal state power in the infancy of Indian independence.¹⁷ Only when he appointed Krishna Menon as his Defense Minister in 1957 did a discernible interest begin in military capabilities to achieve foreign policy interests.¹⁸ In this case, Menon convinced Nehru to use the Indian Army to acquire disputed border territory in the Himalayas in 1962 (8 July-21 November). Initially successful, the Indians were devastated by a powerful Chinese counteroffensive. China quickly negotiated the end of the conflict and withdrew to the pre-conflict borders. It was a publicly embarrassing moment for national pride and the Indian government.

China and India share some cultural and economic concerns. Jawaharlal Nehru originally had a vision of both countries being leading partners in Asia. However, the border dispute of 1962 led to a path of disagreement. China is much more interested in its own domestic development, and the continued rule over Tibet, so it pursues a dialogue with India, while maintaining relations with Pakistan and the United States as a balance against any Indian influence in South or Southeast Asia. China continued its military sales to Pakistan, especially in missile technology,

as a balance of power against India. The currently developing United States-India relationship (2001-2003) is an impetus for China to improve relations with India. China sees India as a possible balancing force in a multi-polar world. This has created a dynamic whereby China, the United States, and India should develop a “soft balance of power” via diplomatic and economic means to improve bilateral relations between these states.¹⁹

Pakistan is the greatest immediate concern to India in South Asia. Ever since partition, the two have been at odds, especially over Jammu and Kashmir (See Figure 3, Map of



FIGURE 3. MAP OF KASHMIR

Kashmir, page 7). India has fought three major wars with Pakistan, in 1947, 1965, and 1971, interspersed with skirmishing along the Line of Control (LOC). In 1971, East Pakistan became Bangladesh after India's victory. In 1999 and 2002, Pakistan and India have had major border disputes over Kargil and Jammu-Kashmir. The Kashmir Crisis began in 1947 when the Hindu state ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, signed the predominantly Muslim state over to the Indian government in return for military aid and a promised referendum. Since 1989, a Muslim fundamentalist insurgency continues against Indian rule over Kashmir, where most people want independence or accession to Pakistan.²⁰ Serious escalation between the two countries in 2002 produced greater international notice due to the fact that both nations possess nuclear weapons. The continued armed occupation by India over these two provinces, plus radical elements inside Pakistan that support the "Jihadi" freedom fighters inside Kashmir, will lead to further conflict. The LOC that demarcates the two countries' borders has long been contentious, with frequent violations on both sides. Artillery duels over the LOC were heavy and consistent until 2000. In October 2001, there was a suicide attack on the Kashmir Parliament that killed 30 people. Then again, in December 2001, there was an attack on the Indian Parliament in New Delhi by Kashmir extremists. Immediately after this, both sides went to full military mobilization, the largest since the 1971 War. After a 14 May 2002 attack on an Indian Army base in Kashmir, the crisis had its most dangerous period, with a stand-down by both sides after unprecedented high level diplomatic intervention by the United States in late May and early June 2002.

Currently, political mediation has bogged down and the referendum in Kashmir during October 2002 had a low turn-out due to threats of violence from both sides. Radical Islamic fundamentalist elements inside Pakistan that support independence for Jammu and Kashmir, or annexation into Pakistan, will continue to make President Pervaiz Musharraf's hold on power difficult.²¹ Without Pakistani support the Kashmiri Insurgency would collapse. After the 1971 War, both India and Pakistan signed the Simla Accord. This accord was an agreement that the dispute over Kashmir would be resolved bilaterally between both countries. India is hesitant to back down because of its large Muslim population through-out the country. India sees the Kashmir Crisis as central to the maintenance of secular democracy. If India yields to Pakistan on Kashmir, the fear in New Delhi is that domestic unrest could be unleashed. In March 2003, there is still no significant dialogue with hostile rhetoric and continued intermittent shelling and small-scale violence across the Line of Control. Pakistan argues that Kashmir should be allowed to decide its own future since the province is predominantly Muslim. Pakistan also cites numerous United Nations resolutions calling for a peaceful settlement and a referendum. At the

start of April 2003, Pakistan's Prime Minister Zafarullah Jamali stated that a dialogue with India urged by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's statement at a public rally for talks with Pakistan is a "positive development."²²

The Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Pakistan's national intelligence service, has had links to Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Islamic fundamentalists inside Kashmir. The ISI have now found themselves completely turned around in perspective since Pakistan's support of America in the War on Terror. They must support President Musharraf, despite some radical elements within Pakistan sympathetic to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Further complicating matters is former American support of Pakistan such as in the 1980s when it was an ally of the United States against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. These issues of former support and how it had been cut off have fostered mistrust, and must be solved if future Pakistan-US relations are to improve. The former support of Pakistan in the 1980s is also an area that fostered mistrust in India. Policymakers must understand this when dealing with the Indian government.

Pakistan has developed the use of nuclear weapons because its armed forces and territory are too small to withstand an all-out assault by India. Pakistan's armed forces are at an estimated strength of 620,000 active with another 513,000 reservists compared to India's estimated strength of 1,263,000 active and 535,000 reservists.²³ Speculation and analysis by experts portend that Pakistan would use a nuclear weapon if it was invaded and felt it was in a losing situation. India has developed nuclear weapons to initially counter the threat of China's nuclear arsenal, but Pakistan is now perceived as the major threat. India wants to maintain its place as a power in the region, especially with China to the North, who is also friendly with Pakistan.

This nuclear arms race has created a new dynamic, whereby both India and Pakistan want world attention, but agree only to diplomatic assistance in mediation. The use of a new security alliance, with such facets as international observers on the ground, is unacceptable to both sides due to heightened national pride over sovereignty issues. Dialogue must continue with assistance from other nations, especially those with nuclear weapons that can help safeguard and open confidence-building measures in such a way that detente would prevent an accidental launch or defuse tensions in this volatile dispute. The overthrow or coup d'etats of the present Pakistani head of state, President Musharraf, would be calamitous, especially if radical elements were able to control Pakistan's nuclear warheads.

Ever since its creation in the 1971 India-Pakistan War, Bangladesh is seen as falling in an Indian sphere of influence. Only a small portion of the boundary with India remains undelimited; discussions to demarcate the boundary, exchange 162 miniscule enclaves, and

allocate divided villages remain stalled. There are some small skirmishes and illegal border trafficking, so some small-scale violence along the border continues. Bangladesh has protested India's attempts to fence off high traffic sections of the porous boundary. Burmese (Myanmar) attempts to construct a dam on the border stream in 2001 prompted an armed Indian response halting construction. Burmese Muslim refugees migrate into Bangladesh straining meager resources. Bangladesh also has a problem countering drug traffickers transiting its territory, and therefore so does India.²⁴

Nepal is also seen as an Indian sphere of influence. Nepal's current Maoist insurgency is quite radical and is akin to the Sendero Luminoso movement in Peru. Beijing is quite distressed at the potential of this radical element, because of its possible attractiveness to the disenfranchised during its own current economic rebuilding. India is concerned because of cross-border trafficking by the rebels and movement of refugees. Nepal is an isolated entity, plus it is surrounded by powerful neighbors like China and India, and it defers to India on most issues. The Communist Party of Nepal-M (Maoist) has control of seven of seventy-five regions.²⁵ The Nepalese government has only recently used its military to address the problem. This is because the problem has become so large, the national police cannot control it. This is a large concern to both China and India, eliciting some support by both powers to support Nepal. This awareness is from two states with large diverse populations (India and China) that fear unrest upon their peripheries. The Nepalese conflict could precipitate a large and complex humanitarian disaster that can cross into their borders.

Central Asia (Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) is an area of great interest for India. As United States influence grows stronger in the region, and Chinese and Russian influence recedes, India sees an opportunity to consolidate its position as a main political, economic and military power in the Indian Ocean basin. A secure "Stans" region helps in reaching this goal. The rich oil and natural gas resources in Central Asia are seen as a potential help to sustain India's economic growth. It is also seen as an opportunity to develop markets for Indian heavy industry. These countries also border Afghanistan, which had been a problem for India when its Taliban regime was in power. (Prior to the downfall of the Taliban regime, India offered support to the Northern Alliance.) It is in India's interests to foster security and economic growth in these areas. Central Asia could be used as a buffer between India and other regional powers and as leverage against China and Pakistan.²⁶ This also fits into the strategic framework India has set forth in its relations with Iran in 2001. Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Iranian President Mohammed Khatami signed the Tehran Declaration, which calls for the construction of a gas pipeline from

Iran to India, and Indian investment and military training in Iran. This is a shared vision for both countries to be regional powers in a new multi-polar world. This helps India also isolate Pakistan through an alliance with predominantly Shia Muslim Iran over Sunni Muslim Pakistan.²⁷

Sri Lanka, India's neighbor to the South, has long been a concern because of sympathetic support in India's Tamil Nadu state by the Tamil Nadu political party. Tensions between the Sinhalese majority and Tamil separatists in Sri Lanka erupted in violence in the mid-1980s. The Tamils are a minority and are more akin ethnically to Southern Indians. The Sinhalese majority attempted to redistribute disparities dating to Tamil favoritism established by the British colonial powers. Ethnic violence erupted with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) "Tamil Tiger" insurgency using terror as a weapon against the Sri Lankan government. Tens of thousands have died in a horrific war that continues to fester. Multiple attempts at peace talks have faltered. The Tamil Tiger insurgents have grown into an almost conventional force, but still use terror as a weapon. The Sri Lankan government fears that the Jaffa Peninsula could fall to the LTTE have evoked support from the United States, China and Pakistan.²⁸ India has long been a source of friction for Sri Lanka, due to the failed peace-keeping effort India hosted in the late 1980s, and the credible allegations that the Indian Defense Minister, George Fernandes, gave orders in 1998 to the Indian Navy to not pursue Tamil Tiger gun smugglers unless they are in India's territorial waters.²⁹ India is tied economically to Sri Lanka, and Southern Indian sympathies for the Tamil Tigers have been dampened by Indian Government support of the current attempts at a peace process. Norway continues to lead the latest peace mediation to stop the conflict.

The Arabian Gulf States are a rich source of trade for India. Under the British Raj, economic ties were forged with major banking occurring in Bombay (Mumbai). During the Cold War, India had defense ties with Egypt and Iraq. India believed it was improving security through friendly cooperation with these two states that also had defense ties with the Soviet Union. A large number of Indian expatriates or Persons of Indian Origin (PIO) work in the Arab Gulf States as a labor force. The estimated size of these groups are 1.3 million in Saudi Arabia and 1.2 million in the United Arab Emirates. These are the largest groups of PIO behind groups living in Malaysia (1.7 million) and the United States (1.5 million).³⁰ Indian goods, labor, and even its large entertainment industry have a following in the Gulf States. During the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, India chartered a ship with the cooperation of many Gulf States to bring its citizens home from the war zone. The cooperation demonstrated in this act of repatriation shows the influence PIO labor has in the Gulf. However, India has been criticized by Islamic states sympathetic to Pakistan over Indian treatment of Kashmir. The general concern is what

would happen if Pakistan wanted to extend its nuclear umbrella over such states as Saudi Arabia. India relies on Middle East energy resources to fuel its economy until it can diversify its sources in Central Asia. A major interest for India is to remain engaged with the Gulf States in an economic and diplomatic dialogue.³¹

India has even taken a proactive stance to further influence beyond its borders in both Central Asia and South East Asia. India has established its first military base outside its borders in Tajikistan in April 2002, in a mutual defense agreement and oil-energy source deal.

Washington Times reporter Shaikh Azizur Rahman tells us: "Analysts say the establishment of the Indian military base in Farkhor will improve India's relations with both Tajikistan and Afghanistan, helping it to contain nuclear rival Pakistan and militant Pakistani groups fighting Indian security forces in Kashmir."³² A dialogue with both Kyrgyzstan and Iran is also a means to expand its influence in Central Asia.³³ It is quite ironic that India, the former colony of Great Britain, has now become a "player" in the "Great Game" of the 21st century to exert influence in Central Asia, like Great Britain and Russia in their Great Game of the 19th century.

India has also created new military, economic and diplomatic ties with countries in Southeast Asia through a "Look East Policy." This Look East policy was developed because of Indian concerns over controlling the sea lines of communication that go through the Indian Ocean to its trading partners, such as Japan, Thailand, Vietnam, and Singapore. India's eastern neighbors, Thailand and Myanmar, share religious, cultural and economic ties with India. Myanmar must cooperate with its larger neighbor to the West, since many countries do not support the repressive regime. Thailand is a large "middle man" in Asia, with goods and services crossing its borders. India, in cooperation with Thailand and Myanmar, wants to create a greater road and transportation network to capitalize on trade through these partners with other Asian countries.

India also seeks to expand its influence in the "Look East Policy" by patrolling close to the Straits of Malacca to counter piracy in cooperation with Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia. India has initiated talks with Myanmar and Thailand to build a better South Asia road network as an additional feature of its "Look East" policy. This also realizes a threat to open sea lines of communication for access to energy sources and trade routes. China is being challenged in its role in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean by the "Look East" Policy. Defense Minister George Fernandes was quoted as saying India's "area of interest...extends from the north of the Arabian Sea to the South China Sea."³⁴

The strategic landscape in South Asia in relation to India, as well as domestic considerations, help sharpen the focus on India's current and future interests. India sees itself

as a dominant power in the region and shares many common goals with the United States in South Asia. India is adapting to the changing post-Cold War strategic climate. Since we have reviewed India's interests, strategic culture, and regional interests, we will now look at the United States interests in regards to India.

THE UNITED STATES AND INDIA

The United States and India have had a long history together, but India was often viewed as being within the British or Soviet sphere of influence, so the past 53 years of US-Indian relations have been one of benign neglect, with meaningful dialogue only begun in the past ten years.³⁵ Nonetheless, the United States and India have had a profound effect upon each other for a long time. Christopher Columbus's search for a new route to India led to the discovery of the New World. So, India has had an impact upon America from its very discovery. The rich merchant trade in the colonies and then the new republic of the fledgling United States of America led to establishment of ties between the two countries. General George Washington appointed a Consul to Calcutta in November 1792.³⁶ Several merchants in New England were involved in the East India trade as well as in China.

The United States, like other powers in the West, looked to the rich resources of India as a means of accruing capital. Additionally, the Missionary movement in America began sending missions to India to assist the local peoples and promote Christianity. Great Britain, first by its creation of the East India Company, and later its creation of the British Raj, had the greatest Western effect upon the subcontinent. India was acknowledged as a sphere of British influence by the United States until the Second World War, when United States policy began to alter significantly.

The United States became a major ally of India in 1962 when China overran India's border in a dispute in the Himalayas. However, India began to court the Soviet Union for trade and arms technology transfers, and ultimately it signed a cooperation and friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in 1971. India was also disdainful of the United States for ordering an aircraft carrier battle group into the Indian Sea during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. When the United States began détente with Beijing in the 1970s, this also cooled Indian-American relations. The United States supported Pakistani General Zia Ul Haq's regime and the "Jihad" against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan during the 1980s with heavy CIA-ISI cooperation. These events were the low points in US-India relations in the past fifty years.

India-US Relations have changed dramatically in the past three years. Prior to that time, India-US relations were poor due to two facts: that during the Cold War, India was originally the

self-proclaimed leader of the “non-aligned movement” and then later, an ally of the Soviet Union. The nuclear tests of both Pakistan and India in 1998 were seen as negative events by the American government with trade sanctions put in place for weapons technology on both countries. In December 2000, a new era was initiated when then-President William J. Clinton visited the continent and a dialogue was begun to open inroads between both countries. The George W. Bush administration in 2001-2002 has built further upon this relationship because of shared interests in South Asia and the War on Terror. The United States of America has initiated the beginnings of a bilateral engagement strategy that will build a stronger United States security relationship with India.

Since September 11, 2001, the Bush Administration has seen the potential of India to become one of the great democratic powers of the twenty-first century, and has worked hard to transform US-India relations.³⁷ India and the US share two vital strategic interests: the free flow of commerce through the Indian Ocean, and fighting terrorism in South Asia to create a more stable region.³⁸ Since India and the US share these two vital strategic interests, America must apply the balanced use of national elements of US power in diplomacy, information, military and economic resources, to create a strategic alliance between India and the US that exerts Indian influence as a stabilizing presence in South Asia.

A joint United States-India statement was released on the occasion of an official visit by Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on 9 November 2001 to Washington, D.C.³⁹ Both President Bush and the Prime Minister agreed to accelerate the growing relationship of their respective countries in trade, defense, and science, as well as combating terrorism.⁴⁰ Both leaders see the United States and India as “natural allies.” The Bush Administration recently lifted economic, military and technology restrictions on India to provide further impetus to American-Indian relations. (These restrictions were put in place against both India and Pakistan for their development and testing of nuclear weapons in 1998.) Globalization demands modernization and this will greatly aid both the military and the economy through the lifting of these sanctions. However, there has been evidence of some corruption whereby Indian businessmen have allowed weapons technology transfers to Iraq. The government of India has moved swiftly to disassociate itself from the exporters.⁴¹ The transfer was through the use of third party governments in the Middle East so the Government of India claims it was not a direct technology transfer under their cognizance. Since both the United States and India have professed support for the prevention of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, this is an area that should be monitored closely.

With India's world view of itself as a rising dominant power in the region, it shares many common goals with the United States in South Asia, as noted in the beginning of this paper.⁴² India also contributes to the global information systems technology sector with a large immigrant base in the United States and a large labor pool in its own southern provinces. This is of interest to many countries world-wide. The boon in information technology transfer has provided a quietly growing lobby for Indian interests in the US Congress.⁴³ According to the noted American specialist on India, Steve Cohen, "No longer an abstraction, India has a visible and tangible new presence in the United States, through the 1.5 million Indian-Americans who have created a positive image and are likely to have an enduring impact on the bilateral relationship."⁴⁴

In 2001-2002, India is the leading country in sending students to the United States for academic advancement. According to the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, India had a 22% increase with an enrollment of 66,836 students in the United States, surpassing China for the first time.⁴⁵ This investment in intellectual capital can have a profound effect on Indian-United States relations in the future. The knowledge gained and the cultural aspects shared could lead to a more aggressive globalization in India and a new generation that will embrace economic reform more willingly.

Policymakers should also understand that any policy adopted towards India by the United States must acknowledge the changing "world view" India has of itself, especially in regards to United States policy towards both Pakistan and China. Some India experts suggest an "India first" but not an "India only" policy by the United States in South Asia.⁴⁶ By this, it is meant that New Delhi be engaged and consulted, but not given a veto over Washington's actions in regards to Islamabad or Beijing. American policymakers should understand that this move forward in bilateral relations with India is a relatively "young" relationship. Another fact that must be acknowledged is also that although both countries have some common interests, both countries interests diverge over Pakistan. A realistic appreciation for this fact must accompany any future policies and decisions.

Since we understand the basic interests America has in regards to India, we must discuss some organizational flaws in three official agencies charged with implementing US national policy with India. The current organizational differences in the National Security Council, Department of State (DOS), and Department of Defense (DOD) have created a disconcerted US effort in dealing with India.⁴⁷

The National Security Council has separated South Asia from the office of Middle East Affairs, placing the former under the jurisdiction of the Special Assistant for Asia. The

Department of State has a South Asia Bureau that covers not only India, but also Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Maldives and Nepal. South Asia is the smallest Department of State bureau and was given reduced influence during the Clinton Administration.⁴⁸ (The CIA also has a similar geographic division policy as the State Department for these regions.) Reviving US ties with Islamabad and renewing efforts with Beijing in the War on Terror requires a balancing of United States interests with India and increased diplomatic efforts from Department of State.

A critical vulnerability to stable United States interests in South Asia resides within the Department of Defense since India and Pakistan fall into two separate geographic Combatant Commands' (Central Command and Pacific Command) areas of responsibility. The Department of Defense would like to resume more military exercises with India and also develop its former useful relationship with the Pakistani armed forces.⁴⁹ This current arrangement has some utility in keeping an objective view in any Indian-Pakistan dispute, similar to the European Command sponsorship of Israel while Central Command has sponsorship of most Arab countries. However, if efforts are not well-coordinated between the two commands, it could have a negative impact upon any future dispute.

The current United States-India bilateral initiatives in defense, trade, intelligence and combating terrorism are dysfunctional. The current system coordinates in a "stove-piped" manner and does not establish rewards for use of "soft power." It also ignores the need for confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan. Neither do these bilateral efforts create a collective effort for other friendly nations that want to engage both the United States and India in South Asia a mechanism to do so. The use of "middle powers" may be less threatening and more productive in constructing a dialogue. Fellow NATO partners, such as Britain, France, or Germany, would appear less threatening in stature, and members of the "Nuclear Club" such as Russia or Britain could be more persuasive than the United States.

These middle powers are trade partners and could be seen as less controversial mediators than a sole superpower like the United States. Russia was a good example of this in its attempted mediation of the Kashmir dispute with the regional meeting in Kazakhstan in Spring 2002. Britain also has close ties to India but must approach any issue with the realization that its being the former colonial power creates some resistance within India.

Reform in US policy implementation must be pursued, while looking for assistance from friendly third nations in order to impress on the countries in South Asia that the United States is evolving in its post-Cold War role in the region. United States policy and interests are often

advanced by its “ambassadors in green and blue”--the US military. Let us look at their supporting role in this region.

As noted earlier in this paper by respected American India scholar, Steve Cohen, India has a large Army, Navy, and Air Force with supporting security paramilitary formations that make it one of the largest defense establishments in the world. The United States should seek to establish a cooperative military engagement partnership between the US and India that:

- deters aggression
- secures the sea lines of communication
- combats terrorism
- establishes confidence building measures to provide stability in South Asia.

The dialogue between these two militaries provides an opportunity for the US to demonstrate military support of democratic practices and institutions. Additionally, intelligence sharing, and cooperation between law enforcement and intelligence services have helped greatly in the War on Terrorism. Immediately after the fall of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, the United States did not contribute significantly in military to military engagement. Since President Clinton’s visit in 2000, greater cooperation has evolved. Both countries’ Special Forces recently conducted an exercise in Agra in 2001. A good example of growing military ties between India and the United States is the recent “Cope India” exercise in October 2002, which was designed to teach both nations more about airlift operations. Since India is a United Nations peace-keeping partner, this facet of operations is of great assistance to India’s armed forces.

The United States-India Defense Policy Working Group (DPG) is the major policy-making mechanism to further progress in this area. This group first met in December 2001, and then again in May 2002. The results from the first two meetings include: combined naval patrols in the Straits of Malacca; resumption of defense trade; combined special forces airborne exercises in Agra, India; a US-India Ballistic Missile Defense Workshop in Colorado Springs, Colorado; and the signing of a General Security of Military Information Agreement to facilitate cooperation in defense technology.⁵⁰ Unfortunately, the continued emphasis on post-conflict Afghanistan and the Iraq War have prevented the convening of the DPG since its last meeting, and no further meetings have been announced.

Other broad issues discussed in the Defense Planning Group included:

- How to strengthen peace and stability in Asia.
- How to strengthen counter-terrorism efforts.
- Dialogue on how to improve the security environment in Afghanistan.

- Rebuilding the Afghan Army.

Sub-groups of the Defense Planning Group have been formed and they are planning in three major areas. These areas are: (1.) Specialized training programs and joint exercises between the two nations' armed forces; (2.) Enhancing military sales cooperation to include the expediting of export licenses to the US; and (3.) Resumption of technical cooperation in defense research, development and production. The International Military Education and Training Program (IMET) is a valuable resource to build bridges between the United States and Indian armed forces. This allows the exchange of senior officers as well as exchange from cadets up to War College students. This allows a broadening of personal contacts and insights that are especially useful during a crisis.⁵¹

In February 2002, Chairman of the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff General Richard C. Meyers visited with Indian Defense Minister, George Fernandes. The visit of such a senior official from the Department of Defense is seen as a very visible commitment by the United States to strengthen military ties with India. In his remarks, General Meyers noted, "The current level of military-to-military cooperation between our countries is unprecedented in the history of US-Indian relations."⁵²

Although the Defense Planning Group develops the major framework of the cooperative defense interaction, the regional Commander for Pacific Command in Honolulu, Hawaii, is the executive agent that handles the detailed coordination and execution of Theater Security Cooperation (formerly known as Military-Military Engagement). In fact, India and Pacific Command are planning a Peacekeeping Command Post exercise in New Delhi in 2003. Pacific Command and the Defense Planning Group can work in concert to develop common military objectives for India and the United States. The most obvious vehicle is to establish a cooperative military engagement partnership between the US and India that meets common security interests. Currently, Pacific Command uses three Executive Steering Groups (ESG) on the service level to coordinate security training and cooperation.

These three ESGs are: Navy-to-Navy Cooperation; Army-to-Army Cooperation; and Air Force-to-Air Force Cooperation. Under Navy-to Navy Cooperation, the US Seventh Fleet and Third Marine Expeditionary Force have established a three-year program of substantive port visits, exercises, combined operations and conferences. Additionally, the talks provided a framework to address such transnational threats as piracy and terrorism. In Army-to-Army Cooperation, US Army Pacific also used a three-year planning approach in discussing joint training (including airborne operations and cold weather/high altitude), military school exchanges, and such issues as humanitarian relief and disaster assistance. US Pacific Air

Force, in Air Force-to-Air Force Cooperation, focused on search-and-rescue and airlift requirements while renewing historical ties from World War Two.⁵³

The United States military is quite capable in this arena as we have seen in such venues as NATO's Partnership for Peace in former Communist bloc countries. This is a good role model for Pacific Command to follow in developing military ties with India. Although military engagement reaps many benefits, it is only one part of national power. Diplomacy, commerce and science are other areas we should now explore.

One of the great leaps in the US-India relationship are the bilateral working groups in diplomacy, commerce, and science. These areas are also known as "soft power" because they can exert great influence of national power in contrast to military "hard power." The National Security Strategy of the United States describes the United States and India as the "two largest democracies...committed to political freedom" and to common national interests in creating a stable Asia, fighting terrorism, and enhancing the free flow of commerce.⁵⁴

India's economy has grown dramatically in the past twelve years due to Indian reforms of its state-controlled economy. The Indian reform program for economics, initiated in 1991, reduced several trade barriers and stimulated an economy closed off to the world for forty-four years. In just four years, India's trade increased from 16% to 23% of the GDP. India has increased access to US markets as well, doubling exports to the United States from \$5.3 billion in 1995 to \$10 billion in 2000. India now supplies more than \$2.7 billion worth of textiles and apparel to the United States.⁵⁵ Businessmen hope for a second generation macroeconomic reform that will open up even more opportunities. India, as we have seen in the strategic landscape, has many cultural and economic ties with its neighbors. The United States should pursue common economic interests with India. For example, in Afghanistan, India has a vested interest in helping the interim government progress. The elimination of the Taliban and Al Qaeda from this area relieves some pressure from support of militants in Kashmir and Kargil. This has also helped in shutting down terrorist network financing as well.⁵⁶

Steve Cohen helps put India's economic growth in perspective: "According to the World Bank's World Development Report 1999/2000, India's economy is gigantic in terms of overall gross national product (GNP). It ranks eleventh in the world, with a total figure of \$421 billion. India's economy is huge, but so is its population. So, while standards of living are rising, India, like its neighbor China, remains a poor country at the aggregate level."⁵⁷

Economic reform offers opportunities for foreign firms. India has opened its energy sector for foreign investment. There are estimates that India will need \$100 billion investments in power and transportation infrastructure improvements to meet modern standards. The high

technology sector, especially in the software industry, has attracted many American firms to India. India's software exports are growing annually and could reach \$40 billion by 2008, two-thirds of which go to Canada and the United States.⁵⁸ Culturally, since Nehru's time, science and technology have been seen as the answers to help pull India's masses out of the depths of poverty and raise the standard of living.

Although current trade practices give India the slight upper hand in trade differences, such as domestic demand for tariffs, the return for American firms' investment has been great. This leads to the possibility that if bilateral relations continue to improve and India continues economic reform, an India-US free trade agreement could be in the near future.⁵⁹

India also belongs to the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC). SAARC members also include Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan. The SAARC was established in 1985 to encourage cooperation in agriculture, rural development, science and technology, culture, health, population control, counter-narcotics, and counter-terrorism. SAARC stresses these as "core issues." In 1993, India and its SAARC partners signed an agreement to lower tariffs in the region over time. With the South Asian Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA), SAARC hopes to finalize the South Asian Free Trade Agreement in 2005 to create a greater free trade zone in its region.⁶⁰

Economically, the enormous labor pool and booming computer information systems industry are great advantages to India if it can continue to reform its economic system. It is through these tenets of national power that India can make a great impact upon its neighbors in the region. As the Western countries' labor pool and population ages and decreases, India will become a major player in the middle position of South Asia straddling the trade routes between East and West. India has the potential to set the pace and outdistance its neighbors in the near future. The question for the United States is: "Can the United States afford to ignore the potential we see now?"

We have seen the converging interests between the United States and India in the post-Cold War era, but can we sit idly by and not take advantage of the opportunities before us? We should consider what price must be paid in risk by not acting to change with the dynamic situation.

In analyzing the risk involved in determining common ends, ways, and means for US-Indian security relations, the application of US resources must be examined. The consequences of not creating a more comprehensive effort in US-Indian security relations is the possibility of an Indo-Pakistani War that could threaten the US Global War on Terrorism, or the

rise of India as a Hindu-Nationalist regional power that would threaten stable relations vis-à-vis the United States and China, as well as Pakistan and the Islamic world. To continue to discount these possibilities by pursuing dysfunctional bilateral US-India relations risks the alienation of India and the disconcerted application of scarce US national resources. Current resources and means are not properly balanced.

In summary, let us review common Indian and US strategic objectives. India and the US share two vital strategic interests: the free flow of commerce through the Indian Ocean, and fighting terrorism in South Asia to create a more stable region. In order to achieve these objectives, we must apply the balanced use of national elements of US power--Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME)--to create a strategic alliance between India and the US that exerts Indian influence as a stabilizing presence in South Asia.

A greater diplomatic effort could be pursued after the end of Operation Iraqi Freedom. Currently high level diplomatic efforts have been the mainstay of Indian-American relations. The appointment of Ambassador Robert Blackwill to India was a key strategic point of the current Bush administration. Ambassador Blackwill is a noted expert in foreign affairs, having served in the first Bush administration, and he is a respected scholar in Arms Control issues. He was current President Bush's foreign policy adviser during his presidential election campaign. The appointment of such a trusted adviser clearly shows the importance the current administration places upon relations with India.⁶¹ Since Ambassador Blackwill's posting to India, almost one hundred cabinet and senior American officials have visited India to include Secretary of State Colin Powell, Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage, and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld. This is an unprecedented engagement in US-Indian relations.⁶² What is still needed is for lower level foreign service personnel and defense personnel to engage their counterparts in developing trust on such issues as how to mediate arms control and the dispute in Kashmir.

In the information arena, the public diplomacy of the Department of State in India is pursued vigorously. The variety of news, cultural exchange, and information available is apparent by visiting the websites of each consulate and the main embassy in New Delhi. This is a source of information for India that helps open common doors and further such exchanges in business and education. Most themes articulated through these mediums urge a strong partnership between the two nations based upon shared democratic values.

Economically, the United States must continue to press India to continue economic reform that moves it further away from its former state-run economy. A second generation of reforms must take place that protect and encourage foreign investment. India must encourage a free trade zone in South Asia with the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

and the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IORARC). An incentive to hasten this would be a free trade agreement between the United States and India as an example for other nations in the region. Private investment by United States' companies also has other benefits. Microsoft President Bill Gates visited India in late 2002, and has partnered with Non-Governmental Organizations to fight AIDS/HIV with an initial commitment of \$100 million. The United States government has pledged to support this over the next five years with \$120 million.⁶³

Possible common military objectives for India and the United States would be to establish a cooperative military engagement partnership between the US and India that deters aggression; secures the sea lines of communication; combats terrorism; and establishes confidence building measures to provide stability in South Asia.

Common Indian-US Strategic concepts exist that can further our common interests. The current India-US Defense Working Group has been a promising start for a US-Indian dialogue at the highest levels. The United States must make a more concerted effort to enhance relations with India to foster peace and stability in South Asia, while maintaining a balance with its neighbors, especially Pakistan and China. The United States can improve its security ties with India by increasing and coordinating bilateral efforts in commerce, science, technology, counter-terrorism and defense in a more comprehensive manner. Engagement in South Asia is an imperative, but it must be a balancing act if it is to succeed. There are some feasible means we must discuss.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

Considering the current resources available, there are three possible options available to the United States to improve security relations with India. The first option would be to maintain the current initiatives with the four bilateral Indian-United States working groups. Without further analysis and consensus-building to unify efforts within the National Security Council, Department of State's South Asia Bureau, and the Department of Defense, this will be the option pursued due to the current emphasis on Iraq, Homeland Defense, and other efforts in the War on Terrorism (WOT). Pressing issues will seek an economy of force measure of allocating slim resources and focus in this region by maintaining the status quo.

Despite these other pressing issues, the volatility of the Indian-United States issues stated above have long-lasting potential with United States policy in South Asia and the War on Terror. Maintaining the status quo should not be pursued as an option in the long term because of the

potentially dangerous and destabilizing factors inherent in the risk of not changing US-India policy.

The second possible option would be to enhance the four bilateral working groups' efforts by creating a regional arms limitations and monitoring apparatus linked to incentives with an interagency approach in commerce, science, technology, and counter-terrorism. This way incentives within United States government agencies could be coordinated and linked to create a "carrot and stick" approach with linked programs. Opening India's and Pakistan's weapons programs would allow safeguards to be put in place similar to the former US-Soviet Union "Hot Line" between capitals and "open skies" subject to verification. If acceptance of such practices were agreed to by both India and Pakistan, the United States and other countries could reward them with trade incentives and foreign aid.

The third possible option is to enhance the four bilateral working groups' efforts by creating a regional arms limitations and monitoring apparatus linked to incentives with an interagency approach in commerce, science, technology, and counter-terrorism as well as establishing an interoperability working group with both affected Combatant Commands (Central Command and Pacific Command) and State Department bureaus (Middle East and South Asia). Now that we understand our alternatives, what can we do?

As we have seen, the road ahead can be fraught with peril. The most determined way to mitigate risk would be to adopt the third option a comprehensive strategy that is funded to support the enhancement of the current four bilateral working groups' efforts. This approach provides the most coordinated strategy to build better security ties. This option will enable the United States to apply a long-term approach to strategy with India, correcting a problem in our past history whereby we did not engage India in a consistent manner. It will also open a greater possibility of multi-lateral engagement and significantly reduce risk by employing a multifaceted interagency approach.

The United States must remain engaged in South Asia, while acknowledging India's rising prominence as a regional power and also balancing United States interest with Pakistan and the War on Terrorism. As President Bush remarked, the world's two largest democracies must work together.

Word Count = 9,389

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